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AS GOOD AS A COMEDY:

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OR, THE

TENNESSEAN'S STORY.

BY AN EDITOR.

William Gilman Sumner

"I have some purpose in it;—and, but beat off these two rooks,
Jack Daw and his fellow, with any discontentment hither, and I'll
honor thee forever."

BEN JONSON.

PHILADELPHIA:
A. HART, LATE CAREY AND HART,
126 CHESTNUT STREET.
1852.

PS 281
A. H.
1852
Oct



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A. HART,
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District of Pennsylvania.

PHILADELPHIA:
T. K. AND P. G. COLLINS, PRINTERS.

5592
as

TO HARRY PLACIDE.

MY DEAR HARRY:—

You have been, in your day and mine, as good as a thousand comedies to me. Why should I not endeavor to requite you, after a very poor fashion of my own? Yet will you not know, any more than the Custom-House, when some repenting sinner of an importer makes anonymous restoration of defrauded dues, whose conscience it is from which this poor acknowledgment is drawn. It is, you may be sure, a very sincere one, coupled with the single misgiving that my little "Comedy" will scarcely prove half so agreeable to you, as yours has ever been to me. Nevertheless, you excellent wretch, be you grateful with the philosophy of Sancho, and look not the gift-horse too narrowly in the mouth.

L'ALLEGRO.

NEW YORK.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IN good faith, I very sincerely hope that the title which this little volume bears upon its face will take nobody in. Now that it is written out, I am not sure that there is anything comic in its pages. I am certain that I have made no effort to make them so; and if merriment should be the result, I shall certainly congratulate myself upon the possession of an involuntary endowment, which takes its owner quite as much by surprise as anybody else. But no; even if there be comedy in the narrative that follows, it will be none of mine—I were a Pagan to lay claim to it. These, in fact, are but jottings down from the lips of another; and I don't know that I was greatly beguiled, when I heard them, into that happy humor which makes one cry out in defiance, "Sessa! let the world pass!" Were I to confess honestly, I should rather admit myself of that graver order of monkhood which never tells its beads on the face of a tankard. I don't see a jest readily at any time, and, knowing my infirmity, I very frequently suffer it to escape me by keeping too closely on the watch for it. It so happens, accordingly, that, being very amiable and anxious to please, I blunder after the fashion of Dr. Johnson's butcher, who was procured to help bolster up Goldsmith's first comedy,

and do all my laughing in the wrong place, and after the mirth has fairly subsided from the muscles of my neighbors. This makes me modest of judgment in all matters that affect the humorous, and hardly a proper person, therefore, to recount that which is so. But, indeed, I propose nothing of the kind. The title chosen for this volume is in some degree in compliance with necessity: it can scarcely be said to have been a matter of choice. This will be explained by our Introduction, to which I shall hasten with due speed, promising to make it as short as possible, since I have no hope to make it funny.

L'ALLEGRO.

NEW YORK.

P R O E M .

WE were nine of us, packed snugly enough in a close stage, and on the high road from Madison, in Georgia, to Montgomery, in Alabama. The night was dark, and the rain falling. The roads were bad, and the driver as drunk as the least reasonable desperate could desire under the circumstances. Everybody has an idea, more or less vivid, of a dark and rainy night; most persons can form a notion of the drunken driver of a stage-coach—a swearing, foul-mouthed fellow, pestilent, full of conceit and insolence, fully conscious of his power over his nags and passengers, and with just reason enough left to desire to use his power so as to keep all parties apprehensive—his horses of the whip, and his passengers of an upset. But if you know nothing of a Georgia road in bad weather, at the time I speak of, you can form but an imperfect idea of the nervous irritability of the nine within our vehicle that night, as, trundling through bog and through brier, over stump and stone, up hill and down dale—as desperate a chase, seemingly, as that of the Wild Horseman of Burger—we momentarily cursed our fates, that had given us over to such a keeping and such a progress. We could not see each other's faces, but we could hear each other's words, and feel each other's hips and elbows.

"Hech! There we go!"

"You're into me, *stranger*, with a monstrous sharp side of your own."

"Beg pardon, but—" [Jolt, toss, and tumble.]

"We're gone now, I reckon!"

A general scramble followed the rolling of the baggage in the rear, and sudden silence of the human voice, while each strove to maintain his equilibrium, seizing upon the nearest solid object.

"She rights!" said one.

"Eh! does she? I'm glad of it," was the reply of another, "since I hope this gentleman will now suffer my head to get back fairly upon its shoulders."

There was a release of the victim and an apology. Indeed, there were several apologies necessary. We were momentarily making free with the arms and sides and shoulders of our neighbors, under the impulse of a sudden dread of the upset, which it is wonderful how we continued to escape. We compared notes. Our apprehensions were general. The driver was appealed to; we howled to him through the pipes of a Down Easter, entreating him to drive more gently.

"Gently, be hanged!" was the horrid answer, followed up by a tremendous smack of the whip. Away went the horses at a wilder rate than ever, and we were left, without hope or consolation, to all sorts of imaginable and unimaginable terrors. We had no help for it, and no escape. We could only brood over our terrors, and mutter our rage. There were curses, not only loud, but deep. It was in vain that our individual philosophies strove to silence our discontents; these were kept alive by the suggestions of less amiable companions.

Our very efforts to conceal our fears sufficiently betrayed them to all who were cool enough to make the discovery. But self-esteem was reassured by the general sympathy of most of our comrades. There were various emotions among us—the modified exponents of the one in common—modified according to age, temper, and education. Our various modes of showing them made us altogether a proper group for dramatic contrasts. We could have played our parts, no doubt very decently, upon any *stage* but that. We could have strutted manfully, and shown good legs; but scarcely upon boards which creaked and cracked as with convulsions of their own, as we hurried headlong up the heights, or rushed whizzing through the mire. And we should have had variety enough for character. Our nine passengers might have represented as many States. Never was there a more grateful diversity. There was a schoolmaster from Massachusetts. Whither, indeed, does not Massachusetts send her schoolmasters, teaching the same eternal notion of the saintly mission of the Puritans, and the perfect virtues of their descendants? The genius of that State was certainly born a pedagogue, with birch in one hand and horn-book in the other! There was a machinist from Maine, a queer, quaint, shrewd, knowing, self-taught Yankee, who had lost half his fingers in experimenting with his own machines, and who was brim-full of a new discovery which is to secure us that “philosopher’s stone” of the nineteenth century—perpetual motion! The principle of our machinist seemed to lie in the amiable good-nature with which certain balls, precipitating themselves upon certain levers, would thus continue a series of ground and lofty

tumblings which should keep the great globe itself in motion without other motive agencies. Our New Yorker was an editor, bound first for New Orleans, and then for Ashland, where he proposed to visit the god of his political idolatry. We had a Pennsylvanian, who seemed to feel as if all the shame of State repudiation lay on his own particular shoulders; and a Mississippian, who appeared to deplore nothing so much as that he could not claim more than the merit of a single vote in the glorious business of defying the foreign creditor of the Union Bank. The encounter between these two parties—the humbled and desponding tone of the one, contrasted with the exulting and triumphant convictions of successful right in the other—furnished a picture of opposites that was perfectly delightful. The leading idea which troubled our Virginian was, that Tyler was to be the last of the Presidents which his State would furnish to the Union; while the South Carolinian, with whom he seemed intimate, consoled him with the assurance that his regrets were idle, as the Union would not much longer need a President. He indulged in the favorite idea that a dissolution was at hand. “The Union,” said he, “answered the purposes of the time. It has survived its uses.” Our Georgian, on the contrary, was for the extension of the confederacy by the incorporation of as many new States south of us as we could persuade into the fold. He was even then upon his way to Texas, provided with his rifle only, in order to be in the way to help in the matter of annexation. Then we had a North Carolinian, a lank-sided fellow from Tar River, who slept nearly all the way, spite of toss and tumble, talked only (and constantly) in his

sleep, and then chiefly upon the trouble of looking after his own affairs. Our *ninth* man was a broth of a boy in the shape of a huge Tennesseean, who filled up much more than his proper share of seat, and, trespassing upon mine with hip, thigh, and shoulder, compelled me (will he, nill he) to reduce myself to dimensions far more modest than I have usually been disposed to insist upon as reasonable. But, there was no chiding or complaining. He was so good-natured, so conscious of his involuntary trespasses; at least, so dubious about them.

"I crowd you, *stranger*; I'm afeard I crowd you;" and he laid his huge paw upon my shoulder with the air of one who solicits all possible indulgence. If I had been utterly squeezed out of proper shape, I could scarcely have forborne the assurance, which I instantly made him, that he didn't crowd me in the least.

"Well," said he, "I'm glad to hear you say so; I was a little dubious that I was spreading over you; and if so, I didn't know what to do then; for here, if you can feel, you'll see my fat lies rather heavy upon the thighs of this perpetual motion person, and my knee is a little too much of a dig for the haunches of the man in front. In fact, he's cutting into me—he's mighty sharp!"

The man in front, who was the Yankee schoolmaster, said something in under tones to the effect that men of such monstrous oversize should always take two places in a public conveyance, or travel in their own. I caught the words, but the Tennesseean did not.

"I'm jest as God made me," he proceeded, as if apologetically; "and if 'twould be any satisfaction to you, *stranger*," addressing me, "I'm willing to say

that I would not be quite so broad if I had my own way, and the thing was to be done over agin. But as that's not to be hoped for, I don't complain at all, ef you don't."

How could I complain after the last suggestion—complain of a man who felt his own misfortune with such a proper conscience! The schoolmaster had something to say. His tone was exceedingly indignant, but too much subdued for the ears of the Tennessean. My amiable recognition of his bulk seemed to have won his affections, if, indeed, his great size and my unavoidable neighborhood did not sufficiently account for them. His great fat haunches nestled most lovingly against me, threatening to overlap me entirely, while his huge arm encircled my neck with an embrace which would have honored that of the Irish Giant. It was fortunate that we had no such sulky scoundrels within the stage as he who lorded it from the box. If we swore at *him*, we kept terms with one another. If the storm roared without, we were pacific enough within; and it was wonderful, with such a variety, and with so much to distress and disquiet! Vexed and wearied with the aspect of affairs without, we succeeded in maintaining good conditions within; our curses were expended upon the driver; for one another, we had nothing but civility; good *nature*, if not good *humor*, keeping us in that sobriety of temper in respect to one another, when an innocent freedom passes without offence, and we tolerate a familiar in the barbarian whom, at another season, we should probably scarce recognize as an acquaintance. But mere good-nature has no chance, in the long run, against the protracted fatigue and weariness of such a

ride as ours; and, as if by tacit consent, all parties seemed to feel the necessity of an effort to dissipate our dolors. The Maine man, it is true, discoursed of machines, and the Massachusetts man of Webster; the one was full of saws, the other of maxims; but the very square and compass character of their mutual minds was a worse monotony and fatigue than the wallowing of our wheels in mire. A lively account, which the Mississippian now gave us, of the pursuit and hanging of the Yazoo rogues—that terrible tragedy, which still needs an historian—soon led us upon another and more agreeable track, upon which the Georgian entered with a narrative of his own experience in catching alligators, in winter, with barbed stakes. To him succeeded the South Carolinian, with an account of a famous set-to which he had enjoyed the season before with certain abolitionists at New Haven, and which he concluded with an eloquent showing of the necessity for a Southern confederacy by next July. A stout controversy followed between him and the representative from Massachusetts, in which the grievances and quarrel between the two States were particularly discussed; the Carolinian concluding by proposing gravely to his opponent that the territory of North Carolina should be hired by the belligerent States for the purpose of settling their squabbles in the only becoming and manly way, by a resort to the *ultima ratio*. This dispute thus determined—for this strange proposition seemed to confound the man of Webster—we all had something to say in turn, each mounting his favorite hobby. It was an easy transition, from this, into anecdote and story, and even our North Carolinian roused himself up with a

grunt, to yell out a wild ditty of the "old North State," which he heard from his great-grandmother, and which he thought the finest thing in the shape of mixed song and story which had ever been delivered to mortal senses since the days of the prophets. It was one of the many rude ballads of a domestic character, which we have unwisely failed to preserve, which rehearsed the doings and death of Blackbeard the Pirate, "as he sailed" in and out of the harbors of Ocracoke and Pamlico. The strain was a woful and must have been a tedious one, but for the interposition of some special providence, the secret of which remains hidden from us to this day. It was observed that the voice of the singer, pitched upon the highest possible key at the beginning, gradually fell off towards the close of the second quatrain, sunk into a feeble drawl and quaver ere he had reached the third, and stopped short very suddenly in the middle of the fourth. We scarcely dared, any of us, to conjecture the cause of an interruption which displeased nobody. If this "sweet singer" from Tar River fell again to his slumbers, it is certain that not a whisper to this effect ever passed his lips. He gave us no premonitions of sleep, and no sequel to his ballad. We were all satisfied that he should have his own way in the matter, and never asked him for the rest of the ditty. He will probably wake up yet to finish it, but in what company or what coach hereafter, and after what season of repose, it is hardly prudent to guess, and not incumbent on us as a duty.

His quiet distressed none of us. There were others anxious to take his place, and we soon got to be a merry company indeed. Gradually, in the increasing inte-

rest of the several narratives, we forgot, temporarily, the bad roads and the drunken driver, recalled to the painful recollection only by an occasional crash and curse from without, to which we shut our ears almost as fervently as did Ulysses, when gliding among the dogs of Scylla. Our singers were, in truth, no great *shakes*, and our story-tellers scarcely better; but we grew indulgent just as we grew needy, and our tastes accommodated themselves to our necessities. It was only after all parties seemed to have exhausted their budget, their efforts subsiding into short and feeble snatches—when there was only, at long intervals, a sort of crackling from dry thorns under the pot of wit—it was only then that our mammoth Tennessean, who had hitherto maintained a very modest silence, as if totally unambitious of the honors of the *raconteur*, now suddenly aroused himself with a shake not very unlike that of a Newfoundland dog fresh from the water.

"Stranger," says he to me, "ef so be you will only *skrooge* yourself up so as to let me have this arm of mine perfectly free for a swing, as I find it necessary, I'll let out a little upon you in relation to sartain sarcumstances that come pretty much to my own knowledge, a year or two ago, in Florida."

To *skrooge* myself up, in the expressive idiom of my neighbor, into a yet narrower compass than I had been compelled to keep before, was a thing wholly out of the question. But a change of position might be effected, to the relief of both parties, and this was all that he really wanted. I contrived, after a desperate effort, to satisfy him, and, in some degree, myself.

"I can't, somehow, talk easy, ef my arms ain't

loose," he continued, apologetically. "My tongue and arm must somehow work together, or I ain't half the man I ought to be. It's like being suffered to spout out, when you're rushing upon the inimy; and when you can halloo as you rush, you feel wolfish all over. I've had the feeling. Now, it's so in talking. Ef you can use the arms when you talk, your words come free, and jest of the right nature. It's like what people mean when they say 'the word and the blow!' They do help each other mightily. Now, I'll try, as we're mightily close set for room in this wagon, to jest make as little a swing of the arms as possible; for you see, I might, *onintending* anything of the sort, give a person, standing or sitting on *eny* side of me, a smart notion of a knock; that is, in the heat and hurry of the argyment. I've done such a thing more than once, without meaning it; only I'll try to be within bounds this time, and I beg you'll take no offence. I'm sure, gentlemen, if my motion don't trouble you, though it's a rether on-easy one, I shan't mind it at all myself."

Here was an excellent fellow! In his eloquence, he might swing his great mutton fist across my mazzard, and the thing, if not positively disagreeable to me, would be of no sort of disturbance to him! It was difficult to conceive in what school he had acquired his philosophy. It was certainly as cool as that of St. Omer's, but rather lacking in its refinements. At all events common sense required that, as I could not entirely escape his action, I should keep as sharp an eye upon it as possible. It might have been the safest course to reject the story in regard to its accompaniments, but that would have seemed unamiable, and I might

have incurred the reproach of being timorous. Besides, there was some curiosity to hear what sort of a story would issue from such a source, and we were all too much in need of excitement to offer any discouragements to a new hand proposing to work for our benefit; so, after modestly suggesting the propriety of using as little action as possible, we began to look with considerable anxiety to the reopening of those huge jaws, from which, to say truth, whatever might be the good things occasionally going in, but few of us had any anticipations of good things coming out. But he was slow to begin. He had his preliminary comments upon what had gone before. His previous silence seems to have been due to his habit of bolting all his food at once, and digesting it at leisure. We were now to hear his critical judgment on previous narratives:—

“I’ve been mighty well pleased,” quoth the Tennessean, “with some of them sarcumstances you’ve been telling among you, fellows, and I’ve made considerable judgment on some of them that don’t seem to me made to carry water. But I won’t be particular jest now, except to say that I don’t see that the narrow man thar, with his hips cutting into the saft parts of my knee at every turn down hill (the New England schoolmaster), I don’t see, I say, that he made so good an one of it as he might have done. Though that, agin, may be the misfortune of the sarcumstance, and not his fault in telling it. The sense is, ef so be the thing happened as he tells it, then the whole town and country ought to be licked to flinders for suffering the poor gal to be so imposed on. By the powers! I’d fight to the stump,

eny day and *eny* how, but I'd make the men see that the poor weak woman was not to be the only sufferer!"

It would be a tedious task, wanting our Tennesseean's air, tone, and manner, to follow up this trail, and show upon what grounds our backwoodsman took offence at the *proprieties* in our Yankee's story. It was one of those cruel narratives of seduction, so frequent in large commercial cities, where the victim is the only sufferer, and the criminal the only one to find safety, if not sympathy. The narrator had given it as a fact within his own experience, as occurring in his native city; and the offensive defect in his narration, which the skill of the Tennesseean was able only to detect and not to define, consisted in his emotionless and cold-blooded way of unfolding his details of horror, without showing that he felt any of the indignation which his tale provoked in every other bosom.

"Such things can't happen in Tennessee, I tell you, stranger; and ef they did, nobody would be the wiser of it. You'd hear of the poor gal's death, the first thing, and she'd die, *prehaps*, of no disorder. But she'd rather die right away, a thousand deaths, sooner than have her shame in the mouth of any of her kindred; and ef so be it happen to leak out, there would be somebody—some brother, or friend, or cousin, or, may-be, her own father, or may-be a *onknown* stranger like myself—to burn priming for her sake, so that the black-hearted villain shouldn't have it all to himself. But I ain't a going to catechize your story. I rather reckon it can't be true, jest as you tell it, stranger. I can't think so badly of the fellow, Compton, though I reckon he's bad enough, and I can't think so meanly of your people, that

could let him get off without a scratch upon his hide. I reckon it's a made up thing, jest to make people sorry, so I won't believe a word of it. But the one I have to tell is in sober airnest. It happened, every bit of it, on good authority. Indeed, I'm a knowing to a part on it myself, as you'll see when we get on; though the better part of it I got from the mouth of another. It's a history I picked up in Florida, when I went down to fight the Simenoles. You know that when the rig'lars got on so badly with the Injins, splurging here and there with their big columns, and never doing anything, old Hickory swore, by all splinters, that we boys from Tennessee should do the business. So we turned out a small chance of volunteers, and I was one among 'em. Down we went, calkelating to ride like a small harricane through and through the red skins; but twan't so easy a matter, after all, and I don't think we Tennesseceans did any better than other people. It wa'n't our fault, to be sure, for we'd ha' fit fast enough, and whipped 'em too, ef the sneaking varmints would ha' come up to the scratch; but they fought shy, and all the glory I got in the campaign for my share, would lie on the little end of a cambric needle. But I learned some strange things in the campaign, and I ain't a bit sorry that I went. One sarcumstance, it seems to me, was a leetle more strange than anything I've hearn in this wagon, and if I could only tell it to you, as I heard some parts of it tell'd to me, I reckon you'd all say 'twas *as good as a Comedy!*"

"*As good as a Comedy!*" was the hopeful exclamation all round.

"Let's have it, by all means," was the eager chorus of arousing spirits.

"Ay, Tennessee, out with it, in short order," was the abrupt cry of the Georgian.

"Oblige us," was the condescending entreaty of South Carolina.

"Go ahead, old horse," yelled the Mississippian, wheeling about from the middle seat of the stage, and bringing his hard hand flatly down, and with great emphasis, upon the spacious territory of thigh that Tennessee claimed for its own, while trespassing greatly upon that of its neighbors; and the entreaty was promptly followed up by the machinist from Maine, the ex-editor from New York, and even the lymphatic pilgrim from Tar River, who, starting from his seventh heaven of sleep and dream, cried aloud, in half-waking ecstasy—"A comedy, O! yes, gi's a comedy. I'm mortal fond of comedy."

"Let it but prove what you promise," said the New Yorker, "and I'll send it to Harry Placide."

"Harry Placide?" exclaimed Tennessee, inquiringly.

"The great American actor of comedy!" was the explanatory answer from New York. "I'll write out your story, should it prove a good one, and will send it to Harry. He'll make a comedy of it, if the stuff's in it."

We spare all that New York said on the occasion, in honor of comedy and Harry Placide, and in respect to native materials for the comic muse; particularly as the Mississippian wound him up, in the most prolonged part of his dissertation, with—

"Oh! shut up, stranger, anyhow, and don't bother your head about the actor until we get the play."

Not an unreasonable suggestion. Our Tennessean

seemed to fear that he had promised too much. He prudently qualified the title of his narrative ; apparently discovering, for the first time, that "comedy" meant something different from story.

"Comedy," said he ; "comedy ! Well, gentlemen, I tell you that when I first heard the affair, everybody said 'twas as 'good as a comedy,' and I thought so too. 'Twas over a camp-fire that we first heard it, and it mout be that we were all of us jest in the humor to find a comedy in anything. The story mayn't be like a comedy, the way I tell it, for you see I don't profess to be good in sech histories ; but I reckon ef you could ha' seen and heard the chap that first tell'd us, by them old camp-fires, on the Withlacoochee, you'd say, as we said all of us, 'twas as 'good as a comedy.' "

"Did it make you laugh?" demanded New England, abruptly.

"Laugh ! I guess some did and some didn't," was the satisfactory but simple reply. "What I saw of the affair myself was no laughing matter ; but we'll keep that back for the last. 'Twas something a'most too strange for laughing ; the more, too, as we know'd it to be nothing but the truth, and it happened here, too, in one of these western counties of Georgia."

Here the Georgian put in, confidently—

"I reckon I know all about it. I've heard it myself."

"Well ! you'd better tell it, then," quoth Tennessee, very coolly.

"Oh, no !" modestly responded Georgia.

"But, oh ! yes ! Ef you know it, you've a sort of right to it, sence it's in your own country ; and I rather reckon you can make a better mouthful of it than I.

I'm but a poor stick at such things, and am quite as ready to hear you, stranger, as to talk myself."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the Georgian. "Go ahead, man. I'm a mighty conceited fellow, I know, but that's no reason you should hold me up to make me say so."

"Gi's your hand, my lad; you're a good we'pon, I see; though, may-be, a little too quick on trigger."

A gripe of the extended fists followed in the dark, and the Tennessean proceeded.

"The sarcumstance that I am going to tell you tuck place in one of the western counties of Georgia, not many years ago, and there's many a person living who can jest now lay their fingers on the very parties. I've seen some of them myself. You must take the thing for its truth more than for its pleasantry; for, about the one I can answer, and about the other I'm as good as nobody to have an opinion. I'm not the man to make folks laugh, onless it's at me, and then I'm jest as apt to make them cry, too; so you see I'm as good as comedy and tragedy both, to some. But, as I confess, a joke don't gain much in goodness when it leaves my mouth; and jef so be—"

We silenced these preliminaries *viva voce*; and, thus arrested, our Tennessean left off his faces and began. In a plain and direct manner, he related the occurrences which will be found in the following chapters. He was no humorist, though he suffered us all to see in what the humorous susceptibilities of his story lay. It was the oddity of the circumstances, rather than their humor, that held out the attraction for me; and I could readily perceive how, without confounding comedy with the merely humorous and ludicrous, the materials thus

thrown together might, by a dexterous hand, be converted to the purposes of the stage. The story illustrates curiously the variety and freedom of character which we find everywhere in our forest country, where no long-established usages subdue the fresh and eager impulses of originality, and where, as if in very mockery of the conventionalities of city life, the strangest eccentricities of mood and feeling display themselves in a connection with the most unimpeachable virtue—eccentricities of conduct such as would shock the demurer damsel of the city, to whom the proprieties themselves are virtues—yet without impairing those substantial virtues of the country girl, whose principles are wholly independent of externals. Let the reader only keep in mind the perfect freedom of will, and the absence of prescriptive or fashionable discipline in our border countries, and there will be nothing strange or extravagant in what is here related of the heroine.

In putting these details together, I have adopted a fashion of my own, though without hoping, any more than our Tennessean, to bring out the humorous points of the narrative. These must be left to the fancy of the reader. “As good as a comedy” need not imply a story absolutely comic; and I do not promise one. Still, I am disposed to think and to hope that the title thus sportively adopted will not be found wholly inappropriate to the volume.

NEW YORK.



AS GOOD AS A COMEDY:

OR,

THE TENNESSEAN'S STORY.

CHAPTER I.

A GEORGIA BREAKFAST.

LET us start fairly, and not on an empty stomach. Reader, we begin with a Georgia breakfast. We are at one of those plain, unpretending, but substantial farm-houses, which, in the interior of Georgia, and other Southern States, distinguished more especially the older inhabitants; those who, from time immemorial, have appeared pretty much as we find them now. These all date back beyond the Revolution; the usual epoch, in our country, at which an ancient family may be permitted to begin. The region is one of those lovely spots among the barrens of middle Georgia, in which, surveyed from the proper point of view, there is nothing barren. You are not to suppose the settlement an old one, by any means, for it is not more than twenty or twenty-five years since all the contiguous territory within a space of sixty miles was rescued from the savages. But our *family* is an old one; inheriting all the pride, the tastes, and the feelings which belonged to the old Southern "Continentaler." This will be apparent as we proceed; as it is apparent, in fact, to the eye which contrasts the exterior of its dwelling with

that of the neighboring settlements among which it harbors. The spot, though undistinguished by surprising scenery, is a very lovely one, and not unfrequent in the middle country of the Atlantic Southern States. It presents a pleasing prospect under a single glance of the eye, of smooth lawn, and gentle acclivity, and lofty forest growth. A streamlet, or *branch*, as it is here called, winds along, murmuring as it goes, at the foot of a gentle eminence which is crowned with a luxuriant wealth of pine and cedar. Looking up from this spot while your steed drinks, you behold, perched on another gentle swell of ground, as snug and handsome an edifice as our forest country usually affords; none of your overgrown ambitious establishments, but a trim tidy dwelling, consisting of a single story of wood upon a brick basement, and surrounded on three sides by a most glorious piazza. The lawn slopes away, for several hundred yards, an even and very gradual descent even to the road; a broad tract, well sprinkled with noble trees, oaks, oranges, and cedars, with here and there a clump of towering pines, under which steeds are grazing, in whose slender and symmetrical forms, clean legs, and glossy skins, you may discern instant signs of those superior foreign breeds which the Southern planter so much affects. The house, neatly painted white, with green blinds and shutters, is kept in admirable trim; and, from the agreeable arrangement of trees and shrubbery, it would seem that the place had been laid out and was tenanted by those who brought good taste and a becoming sense of the beautiful to the task. There was no great exercise of art, it is true. That is not pretended. But nature was not suffered to have her own way entirely, was not suffered to overrun the face of the land with her luxuriance; nor was man so savage as to strip her utterly of all her graceful decorations—a crime which we are too frequently called upon to deplore and to denounce, when we contemplate the habitations even of the wealthy among our people, particularly in the South, despoiled, by barbarity, of all their shade-

trees, and denuded of all the grace and softness which these necessarily confer upon the landscape. Here, the glance seemed to rest satisfied with what it beheld, and to want for nothing. There might be bigger houses, and loftier structures, of more ambitious design and more commanding proportion; but this was certainly very neat, and very much in its place. Its white outlines caught your eye, glinting through openings of the forest, approaching by the road on either hand, for some distance before you drew nigh, and with such an air of peace and sweetness, that you were insensibly prepared to regard its inmates as very good and well-bred people. Nor are we wrong in these conjectures. But of this hereafter. At this moment, you may see a very splendid iron-gray charger, saddled, and fastened in the shade, some twenty steps from the dwelling. Lift your eye to the piazza, and you behold the owner. A finer-looking fellow lives not in the country. Tall, well made, and muscular, he treads the piazza like a prince. The freedom of carriage which belongs to the gentlemen in our forest country is inimitable, is not to be acquired by art, and is due to the fact that they suffer from no laborious occupation, undergo no drudgery, and are subject to no confinement, which, in childhood, contract the shoulders into a stoop, depress the spirits, enfeeble the energies, and wofully impair the freedom and elegance of the deportment. Constant exercise on foot and horseback, the fox hunt and the chase; these, with other sylvan sports, do wonders for the *physique*, the grace and the bearing of the country gentleman of the South. The person before us is one of the noblest specimens of his class. A frank and handsome countenance, with a skin clear and inclining to the florid; a bright, martial blue eye; a full chin; thick, massive locks of dark brown hair, and lips that express a rare sweetness, and only do not smile, sufficiently distinguish his peculiarities of face. His dress is simple, after an ordinary fashion of the country, but is surprisingly neat and becoming. A loose blouse, rather more after the Choctaw

than the Parisian pattern, does not lessen the symmetry of his shape. His trousers are not so loose as to conceal the fine muscular developments of his lower limbs; nor does his loose *negligée* neckcloth, simply folded about the neck, prevent the display of a column which admirably sustains the intellectual and massive head which crowns it, and which we now behold uncovered. Booted and spurred, he appears ready for a journey, walks the piazza with something of impatience in his manner, and frequently stops to shade his eyes from the glare, as he strains them in exploring the distant highway. You see that he is young, scarcely twenty-two; eager in his impulses, restive under restraint, and better able to endure and struggle with the conflict than to wait for its slow approaches. Suddenly he starts. He turns to a call from within, and a matron lady appears at the entrance of the dwelling, and joins him in the piazza. He turns to her with respect and fondness. She is his mother; a stately dame, with features like his own; a manner at once easy and dignified; an eye grave, but benevolent; and a voice whose slow, subdued accents possess a rare sweetness not unmingled with command.

"We need wait for Miles no longer, my son," was the remark of the old lady. "He surely never meant to come to breakfast. He knows our hours perfectly; and knows, moreover, that we old people, who rise with the fowls, do not relish any unnecessary delay in the morning meal."

"Well, mother, have it in, though I certainly understood John that he would be here to breakfast."

"Most probably he did not understand himself."

"He is, indeed, a stupid fellow. But, there he is. Ho! John"—calling to the servant whom he sees crossing the lawn in the direction of his house—"ho, John! what did Miles tell you?"

"He tell me he will come, sa."

"Ay, but when?"

"He say dis morning, when breakfast come."

"Ay, indeed! but whose breakfast; his or mine? Did he say he would come to breakfast with me, or after he had eaten his own?"

"He no say."

"Why *did* I send that fellow!" muttered the youth to himself as he passed into the breakfast-room. Let us follow him. How nice are all the arrangements! betraying the methodical and tidy hand of one brought up in the old school. The cloth white as snow, and neatly spread; the silver shining as brightly as if just from the burnish of the smith; and the *tout ensemble* denoting the vigilant care of a good mistress, who *sees*, as well as orders, that her servants do their duty. A single colored girl stands in waiting, dressed in blue homespun, with a clean white apron. The aged lady herself wears an apron, that seems to indicate her own readiness to share in the labors of the household. And now for the breakfast. A Georgian, indeed a Southern breakfast, differs in sundry respects from ours at the North, chiefly, however, in the matter of breadstuffs. In this respect our habits are more simple, particularly in the cities. In the South, there is a variety; and these are valuable chiefly in proportion to their warmth. *Hominy* itself is a breadstuff; a dish that our mush but poorly represents. It is seldom entable out of a Southern household. Then there are waffles, and rice cakes and fritters, and other things of like description, making a variety at once persuasive to the palate and not hurtful to health. These were all in lavish array at the table of the widow Hammond, for such is the name of the excellent lady to whose breakfast board we are self-invited. The breadstuffs had their corresponding variety of meats. A dish of broiled partridges, a steak of venison, and a vase of boiled eggs, furnish an ample choice for a Spring breakfast, and take from us all motive to look farther. Coffee for her son, and tea for herself, constituted the beverage of the breakfast; and we are not unconscious that the platter of white fresh butter, that occupies a place in the centre of the table,

is suggestive of a pitcher of foaming buttermilk that stands at the extremity. Why look further into the catalogue?

For a while the parties ate in silence, or rather they did not eat; one of them, at least, seemed to need an appetizer. Randall Hammond took several things on his plate at the suggestion of his mother, but he merely tasted of them. The partridge was sorely gashed at the first stroke, but the morsel taken from its breast lay upon the fork unswallowed. The youth seemed more disposed to exercise his ingenuity in balancing his spoon upon the edge of his cup; a feat which, having succeeded in, he abandoned for the more difficult experiment of standing the egg upon its point, as if to solve the problem which Columbus submitted to the Spanish doctors. The mother watched with some anxiety these movements of her son.

"You do not eat, Randall."

"No," he said, "I have somehow no appetite;" and he pushed away his plate as he replied.

"You have eaten nothing; shall I send you another cup of coffee?"

"Do so, mother; I am thirsty, though I cannot eat."

The cup was replenished. The mistress dispatches the servant-girl on a mission to the kitchen, and then, after a preliminary hem or two, she addressed her son in accents of considerable gravity, though so coupled with fondness as to declare the tender interest which she had in her subject.

"My son, you well know the regret which I feel at your going to this horserace."

"But I *must* go, mother."

"Yes, I understand that. You must go, as you have promised to do so, and I suppose it's quite unreasonable on my part to desire that you should not comply with what is customary among your associates. I can believe, also, that horseracing is a very different thing, nowadays, from what it was twenty years ago in Georgia."

"O yes, indeed; a very different thing!"

"I hope so; I believe so! If I did not, Randall, nothing should persuade me to give my consent to your exposing yourself to its dreadful influences."

"You need fear nothing on my account, mother."

"Ah! my son;—that is being quite too bold; persons who are thus strong in their own belief are always in danger. But, I trust, you have heard me too frequently on this subject; I trust you feel how deeply I should suffer, did I suppose that you could run a horse, or risk a dollar, in such a practice; to be misled by the persuasions of others, or your own natural tendencies."

"But, why do you think I have any such tendencies, mother?"

"Why have you spent so large an amount on these foreign horses?"

"For the sake of stock, mother. I have an eye to the merits and the beauties of the horse. I know his fine points. I love to look upon them. I know no spectacle more beautiful than a group of these beautiful creatures, wheeling and dashing over the lawn; and as a captain of cavalry, I must be well mounted myself. Beyond this desire, I do not see that I have any natural tendencies that should occasion your fears."

"These tendencies come from this very passion for horsemesh."

"But with me, mother, it is no passion."

"Alas! my son, I know better; all passions begin very modestly. That you have the tendency is enough for me, and, at the risk of giving you pain, I must repeat what I have said before, that you inherit this passion from your most unhappy father."

"No more of that, mother, I entreat you."

"Nay, Randall, but there must be more of it. It is needful for your safety that I should remind you that your father lost his life and fortune both by this insane and dangerous passion. What remains to us of former wealth was happily secured by my father's providence. We had else been destitute. You resemble your father

greatly in most respects. You have his sanguine temperament; his hopeful confidence in himself; his eager will; his lavish expenditure, and his passion for horses."

"But, dear mother—"

"Restrained only, as I trust, my son, by the constant lessons of your mother."

"And by the love I bear her."

"I believe it, Randall; it is God's blessing that I do believe it; otherwise, this would be to me a moment of the dreariest hopelessness of heart. Promise me, dear son, that you will neither run a horse, nor bet upon a horserace."

"Promise, mother!"

"Nay, I ask no promise; I will only pray, Randall, that you will never for a moment forget how much the small remnant of your mother's life depends upon the heed you give to these lessons of her fears and sorrows. Let me not mourn the fate of an only son, as I must always mourn that of a husband."

The youth passed his arms about her, and kissed her tenderly. They had both risen from the table, and they now approached the piazza together.

"There is another subject, Randall, about which I wished to speak with you, but my heart is quite too full just now. I must keep it for another time. It relates to this young lady, Miss Foster."

The youth colored deeply. The flush did not escape the penetrating eyes of the mother. She did not seem to observe it, however, but continued with rare quietness of manner to remark:

"They tell me that you are pleased with her."

"Who tells you?"

"No matter. Enough, that I hear also that she is a maiden of singular levities, of bold, masculine habits."

"O mother! who could have told you this? What a scandalous story!"

"What! has she not some singular habits?"

"Some slight eccentricities, perhaps; something in thought and manner more free and confident than is

common to the uneducated girls of the country, and which they accordingly censure—but—”

“Well, another time for this, my son. There comes Henderson.”

The youth was not unwilling to waive the subject. His eyes were eagerly fixed upon the highway, where a horseman now came in sight.

“Ay, there he is at last, riding like the high-sheriff, as who but he! Should he want breakfast, now, mother?”

“He can have it in a moment; but, unless I am greatly mistaken, he has considered his wants of that sort some time ago.”

A few moments sufficed to determine the doubt. The new-comer cantered rapidly down the road, and was soon within the inclosure.

“Well, Randall, are you ready?” he cried, as he alighted from his horse. The bridle was thrown to a servant, and Henderson ascended to the piazza, where he shook hands with mother and son.

“Ready,” said Hammond, “and have been this hour. What has kept you? Why did you not come to breakfast?”

“For the best of reasons. I overslept myself.”

“Then you have breakfasted, Henderson?” asked the old lady.

“O yes, ma’am. I wouldn’t keep you waiting; though I sent word by John that I would take coffee with you.”

“And a pretty tale he made of it. We waited for you.”

“I’m sorry—” he began to apologize, but the old lady silenced him gracefully, and then took her departure, leaving the young men together.

“So, you overslept yourself, Miles?” was the remark of Hammond. “Something singular for you. Where was you last night?”

The inquirer darted a swift but half-smiling glance of

suspicion directly to the eye of the other. The answer was somewhat hesitatingly delivered.

"Where was I? Oh! at Mrs. Foster's."

"Ah!" was the significant exclamation of Hammond, and a pause ensued between the parties. The tone with which the exclamation was uttered was subdued, the word seemed to escape the lips of the speaker involuntarily, and a keen eye might have detected a slight contraction of the muscles of his brow. But this passed away in a single moment, and putting his arm within that of his guest, with a glance behind him to the breakfast-room, Randall Hammond led his companion down the steps, and they walked away in silence to some distance in the park.

CHAPTER II.

THE FRIENDS.

THE new-comer, whom we are already taught to know as Miles Henderson, was tall of size and graceful of person. In these respects, he resembled his companion; though it needed no second glance of the spectator to discover the superiority, in all that regards bearing and general manner, in the person and carriage of the latter. Henderson was a fine, sprightly, and rather sensible fellow, but scarcely so courtly, so well-bred, and well-looking as Randall Hammond. Still, there were those by whom the former was preferred. He was more frank and less commanding, as a character; more accessible, and accordingly more agreeable to the many, than the man of superior will and general endowments. It does not need, however, that we should strike the balance, just at this time, between them. Such a proceeding will serve hereafter. Enough for us, that the two are most excellent friends; true, whole-souled, and confiding; with neither doubt nor distrust of any kind between them; ready to share their resources, and to peril life, if need be, in behalf of each other. And such had been their terms of relationship from boyhood. They had few other associates to divide their sympathies or provoke jealousies between them. Both of them were the only sons of widowed mothers; and both of them were equally docile in respect to the wishes of their parents. They were not absolutely faultless, but very good fellows, as the world goes; the one being supposed to have a very decided will of his own; the other of having a tendency to good-fellowship of every kind, without losing his equilibrium, in the license which good-

fellowship among young men is supposed to engender. We may state, at the beginning, that, on the occasion of their present meeting, there was something more of shyness and reserve in their mutual bearing, cordial and frank as it really appeared, than had ever distinguished it before. The secret of this, of which each was duly conscious, will be shown as we proceed. They had got to some distance from the dwelling, when, somewhat abruptly, Randall resumed the conversation with an inquiry.

"So you dined at Mrs. Foster's yesterday, Miles?"

"No. I got there in the afternoon. I went down to the village to see Ferguson about that land business, and took the good lady in my way home."

"By going four miles out of the way," said the other, drily.

"You're right, Randall," answered the other frankly, while a slight flush tinged the cheek of the speaker. "You're right; but I reckon it's only what you'd have done yourself."

To this nothing was answered. A moment's pause ensued, when Hammond resumed.

"Was that foolish fellow, Barry, there?"

"No! not then; but I gathered that he had been, during the morning, from something that passed between Geraldine and her mother—"

"Ah! What?"

"Why, as far as I could guess, Geraldine had been rather sharp upon him, in some of her answers; and her mother was quite displeased in consequence. She gave Geraldine a lecture as long as one of Brother Peterkin's, particularly when his dinner has been a good and comforting one; and Geraldine—"

"Minded it quite as little as my roan horse does the snaffle. But how often, Miles, you name her in the space of a sentence!"

"Name her! How often! Who?" The response was stammeringly made.

"Who, but Geraldine Foster? In a single half sen-

tence, I think, you contrived to bring in her name at least half a dozen times."

"Nay, Randall, you're joking. But *once*, 'pon my honor!"

"Pawn nothing, or you lose. The offence is not hanging, unless agreeably. The name is one to be repeated. It is a sweet and musical one."

This was said good-humoredly, a slight smile lightening pleasantly the otherwise grave face of the speaker. His companion discovered a something significant in the look and speech, was himself slightly confused, and concealed it in silence. Hammond quietly turned full upon him, and, laying his hand with affectionate emphasis upon his shoulder, thus addressed him:—

"Look you, Miles, old fellow, there is one small knot between us which remains to be untied."

"Knot between us, Randall?"

"Yes; and the sooner we take it between our fingers, the more certain are we to escape the necessity of putting our teeth to it. We are here by ourselves, and a few moments more—"

"But, have we time, Randall?"

"Time! Yes; we neither of us care much for the race; we shall lose but little."

"But little, in truth. The horses I hear of are only common ones. There is Vose's gray, pretty good at a quarter; and Biggar's young filly out of 'May Queen;' and the old horse 'Bob,' of Joe Balch, which you know was never of much account; and Barry, I understand, means to run his 'Fair Geraldine,' of which he brags so much; and—"

"Enough of your catalogue," said the other, with a smile: "I perhaps know quite as much as yourself with regard to the horses likely to be upon the ground; for Tom Nettles was with me yesterday, and he has all the news. The race, he agrees, will be no great shakes, so that, if we lose some of it, we lose nothing—"

"Yes, but Randall, Geraldine will be there early, and without any male attendance. In fact, I promised her

to be on the ground at the beginning, in order to let her know all about the horses. She is full of it, and is prepared to bet a world of gloves, and purses, and handkerchiefs. She expects you there early also. She told me, indeed, that you had promised her—”

“Ah! she remembered it, did she?—well!” after a moment’s pause; “we shall still be there in season; what I have to say won’t take many minutes. The chief difficulty was to get up the resolution to say it at all, Miles.”

“The resolution, Randall? Why, what can it be?”

“Can’t you guess?” replied the other, fixing his eyes keenly upon those of his companion. The orbs of the latter sunk beneath the scrutiny.

“I see that you know. Let us sit here, Miles.”

They were now beneath a magnificent cluster of oaks, covering five or more acres of ground, and looking forth, from a noble eminence, on lawn and field, and plain, and high road, that stretched away below. Sylvan seats, manufactured rudely, but not without a native ingenuity, out of wands of hickory and elm, into Gothic and fantastic forms, were conveniently distributed for the lounge, while great streamers of drooping gray moss festooned the outstretching arms of the several trees with a drapery not less appropriate than natural. Hammond pointed his companion to one of these seats, while he took another close beside him. An inconvenient pause followed of a few moments, which was finally broken by the strong will of the former, which was of that fearless and frank character that could soon shake itself free of all feelings of social awkwardness when resolved on the performance of a duty. His hand again rested kindly on the shoulders of Henderson, as, looking him affectionately in the face, he thus proceeded to unfold the matter which troubled him.

“Miles, old fellow, it won’t do, after so many years of close and brotherly communion; years when we were all in all to each other, and seemed to live for nobody

beside ; I say, it won't do for us now to suffer any mistrust or misunderstanding to grow up between us."

"Surely not, Randall!—I wouldn't for the world!—But what mistrust—what misunderstanding?"

"Hear me, Miles; mistrusts and misunderstandings grow very naturally and very silently between friends from the slightest beginnings. There's no seeing them at first, unless the heart is watchful of itself, and even then they are apt to be let alone to grow apace, as all ill weeds do, unless the heart is properly jealous of itself. Now, it may be that my heart is equally mistaken in its suspicions of itself and of yours—"

"Of mine, Randall?"

"Yes! I have reason to believe that there has been a slight falling off between us ever since Geraldine Foster returned to the neighborhood."

"Randall!" said the other, reproachfully.

"It is even so, Miles; but it must not be so any longer. For this reason, I have determined to speak out plainly before the weed grows too strong for the ploughshare. We were friends from boyhood until now, and your friendship has been, and I trust will continue to be, quite as precious to me as any love of woman. We must continue to be friends, Miles, even though we should both of us love Geraldine Foster."

The other clasped his hands together, as if with a sudden anguish.

"Ah, Randall!—I did fear it; I did!"

"It is unfortunate, Miles, that such is the case, but it is no longer to be feared, and it need not be fatal to our friendship. I can love Geraldine with all the passion of a Georgian's heart; but, Miles, I can love you too, and I will love you to the last. To be sure of this, we have only to understand each other. There must be no doubts, no mistrusts, no suspicions between us. You love her; you will seek her; you will try to win her love if you can; and for this I shall afford you every proper opportunity, not hesitating to avail myself of the chances that seem to encourage me. Thus far, we

have both sought her without interference of each other. We will continue to do so. It is the instinct of a true friendship which has compelled this forbearance. I frankly admit to you that, as yet, she has given me no proofs that she cares one straw for me more than for another. If you can say that you have been more fortunate, speak it out, Miles, like a man, and I pursue her no longer; I leave the field entirely to yourself."

"You are a noble fellow, Randall, and deserve the girl; which I don't. I could no more have mustered the heart to talk of it to you, as you have just done to me, than I could have found wings to fly; yet I felt that that was the only way. I do love her, as you say; but I must own that, like yourself, I have had no encouragement. But no more does she seem to show favor to others. She has several suitors, you know?"

"Yes! but none, I think, that either of us has need to fear. You, at least, are the only person whose chances disquiet me. She has the sense to perceive your worth—to respect you—"

"I don't know that," was the somewhat sullen answer, with a discontented shake of the head; "she treats me mighty scurvily, at times. You know her way!"

"Yes; but I know it is her way, which shows itself to all others as it shows itself to you, though each person naturally thinks himself the worst treated of all. She is a tyrant, knows her power, and is but too fond of abusing it; but she is a noble creature, nevertheless, with all her faults."

"A beautiful creature, Randall!"

"I don't speak so much of her beauty, Miles, though, as you say, she is very beautiful; but she is a *genuine* creature. She is wrong frequently, and says and does wilful and mischievous things; but I do not think she has any cunning, which I look upon as fatal to all the beauty that woman could possess. She speaks, and thinks, and feels, very much as if a feeling and honest heart was in her bosom, which had not yet been tortured

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out of shape and nature by the tricks of society and the teachings of other women. It is this for which I love her chiefly, and which reconciles me to so much of her eccentricities and wilfulness. I suppose she treats you only as she treats me and all others. The truth is, she not only feels her power, and is rash because of her own impetuous spirit, but she has learned to distrust the professions and attentions of gentlemen. She has met with flatteries and flatterers at Savannah and Charleston, and has learned perhaps to despise them, not because she did not like attention and homage, but that she required them to be interesting as well as suppliant. It is the insipidity of beaux, rather than their devotion, that her bold mind, which resents the commonplace, has learned to distrust and to contemn. Fortunately, you and I are no *beaux*, Miles; but she has yet to discover what we are. That she will find out, if time be allowed her, I make no question. I confide in her sincerity of mind; in what seems the very wilfulness of her heart; in its warmth, its impulse, and the shrewd good sense, which is quite as apparent to me in her conduct as her eccentricities."

"Ah! Randall, you need to fear nothing," was the somewhat desponding answer of the other; "I'm thinking she already sees you with kinder eyes than anybody else."

"Scarcely, Miles; for I am not taking the course to win her affections suddenly. I confess to some policy in this respect. She would rate me with the rest, if I sought her like the rest. I must approach her as a man, and not as a schoolboy."

"You were always a man, Randall, even when a schoolboy."

"I'm not sure, Miles, that you pay me any compliment in this opinion. My consolation is that it is not just. Your mannish schoolboys are usually destroyed by their precocity. Still, if I can persuade Geraldine that I am a man now—"

"You will—you will!" said the other, with a sigh.

"Nay, nay, Miles; I must have none of this despondency. You must pursue your chase with as much hope and ardor as decision. As I have said already, I am not taking the usual course for success, and there is one evil influence particularly at work against me."

"What is that?"

"Her stepmother's dislike to me, which flows naturally from the slights which she complains of at the hands of my mother. My mother, who comes from an old stock, and a very proud one, dislikes the obtrusive and bad manners of Mrs. Foster. It is not that she is of humble origin, but that she is pert and presuming, and has made several efforts, without success, to find her way to my mother's intimacy. Besides, Mrs. Foster evidently inclines to this little fellow, Barry, who treats her with a degree of deference which amounts to sycophancy, and who, besides, has the prospect of much greater wealth than either of us could possibly hope to acquire. The stepmother must have succeeded before this, had it not been for the native good sense and the strong will of Geraldine. Yet she may at last—"

"Who, Geraldine? Never! She despises Barry."

"Very likely; indeed, I know she must; but that don't materially impair his chances, should circumstances favor him. Many a passionate woman, taken in the lucky moment, has married the object of her loathing. This is woman's weakness. But we needn't linger in this discussion. I have made a clean breast of it. You have done the same. What next? Why, that we should pursue our objects, Miles, as we have always pursued them, with candor, with mutual sincerity and love. Fair play between us will always keep us friends, let who will get the lady."

The cordial gripe of their hands which followed was as an oath between them. Much more was said, which it does not concern us to repeat. A few moments found them mounted, both on blooded steeds of the best breeds in the country, and on their way to the

country race-course, not yet famous in the sporting calendar, which was honored with the name of Illilabee, after an ancient tribe of Indians, all of whom are extinct.

CHAPTER III.

HILLABEE RACE-COURSE.

IN the more thinly settled regions of the South and West, a thousand sports are resorted to, to compensate the want of society, and to supply equivalent pleasures for those of a great city. On public days, the villages, or hamlets rather, are always crowded with people. The County Court brings together hundreds who rejoice that they have no business within its precincts; while on days of sheriff and public sales, other hundreds appear within sight of the auctioneer's hammer, who have neither means nor wish to buy. Muster-day calls forth its hosts in addition to those who come for training; and Charity, availing herself of the popular need, opens her frequent fairs for philanthropic purposes, relying on the universal desire for society to persuade into useless expenditure those whom it would not be easy to tempt to a benevolence for its own sake. Saturday, in these regions, is almost as much a holiday with the full-grown farmer as it is with the schoolboy, and usually takes him to the nearest place of gathering, which is usually a grocery, under the pretence of laying in the supplies for the week; but really with the no less human motive of procuring those social excitements which do not always result in the elevation of his humanity. Here, he rewards the patient labor of five days at the plough with potations which exhaust much more certainly than any labor. He calls for his quart of whiskey, which he shares with comrades, who find similar supplies, and, towards evening, he may be seen wending homewards, balancing himself with no little difficulty upon his steed, with a jug well filled, hanging

in one end of a sack across his saddle, the other end being stored with such supplies as will soothe the apprehended anger of his spouse. It is not unfrequently the case that, overtaking his capacity, he imbibes too many potations for his equestrianism, and man, jug, and saddle find their way into ditch or thicket, while the unincumbered horse gradually crops his way home. This, fortunately, is but an occasional history now. There was a time when it was much more frequent, and associated with other practices—the brutal scuffle, the vindictive fight, the blasphemous language, which left our hopeful humanity but little of which it could really boast. Happily, this period is one of which the memory grows daily more and more imperfect. The sports of the people of the South and West, even along the border settlements, are of a more grateful character. The horserace is that which more nearly resembles those of the past, since it necessarily brings into most decided activity the animal tendencies of the people. It is here that the great masses prove their affinity with the ancient Saxon family of Bull! The picnic and the fishing-party will suffice for girls and boys in the season of romance, which is one simply of mutual confidence and hope; but the *turf* for all parties, at all seasons. It is here that all meet as upon a common ground, and amidst a thousand inequalities of wealth and life, show and condition; no one thinks so much or so meanly of himself as to be absent. Few think of themselves at all, at such a period. The horserace commends itself to the great body of the forest population more than any other amusement. It is an image, in some degree, of war. It appeals particularly to a people scarcely one of whom fails to keep, and not one of whom is unequal to the most excellent management, of a horse. Commend us, accordingly, to the Southern turf. Here, the sport is not an affectation. It is enjoyed with a zest. Here life and nature speak out in all their varieties of character. The dullest peasant looks animation as the sleek coursers wind beneath his sight. His eye becomes bright

and knowing. He looks at head, heels, and neck, with the eye of a connoisseur. He feels the breast and shoulders knowingly. He adopts his favorite, and then shouts his preference in defiance to all comers. He is ready with or for a banter. He is prepared to stake his earnings of a year upon his judgment. His greasy pocketbook lies ready in his grasp. His bales of cotton are folded up in tens, and twenties, and hundreds, waiting deliverance or companions in bondage. He is no longer a person of drooping and grave aspect, drowsily going forward as if without hope or purpose. He is now all life, eager for opposition, and confident of success. Nor is it the inferior taste and understanding only to which the announcement holds forth temptation. Education here is not construed to assume the total subjection of the animal nature, and the elevation of the moral at the expense and sacrifice of the passions. The excitement which arises from the contemplation of the bold, the fleet, the strong and energetic, is supposed to be clearly consistent, within certain limits, with the laws of refinement and civilization; and the young damsel, who will prattle sentiment with you by the hour, quoting freely and understandingly from the pages of Moore and Wordsworth, yet bounds at the tap of the drum which warns the courser to depart, and glows at the progress of the contending *bloods*; her soul as much excited at what she sees as the young dragoon for the first time jingling his spurs in the heady tempest of the fight.

But a glimpse at the race-course of Hillabee itself will afford us a much better idea of the scene, as it ordinarily appears, than we could possibly convey by any process of generalization. The ground is chosen in a pine barren, which, being entirely level, and free from ridge or inequality for a space of several miles, renders it suitably firm and hard for the required purpose. The trees are cleared away, leaving a spacious amphitheatre something more than a mile in circumference. Within this space the course is laid out in a

circle, and designated by ditches running parallel, with a track of eighty feet between them. The original forests surround the whole; a deep green girdle of massive pines, at whose feet have sprung up, taking the place of those which have been eradicated from the outer edges of the course, a narrow belt of scrubby oaks. Among these, you see numerous carts and wagons. These contain supplies of food and liquor. Here are ginger-cakes and cider, of domestic manufacture. Here are cold baked meats in abundance, ham and "chicken fixings," mutton and pork, spread upon long tables of rough plank, and waiting for customers. On one hand, you see rising the smokes of a *barbacue*; a steer is about to be roasted entire above a huge pit, over which, by means of a stake, he hangs suspended. Steeds are fastened in every thicket, and groups of saddles lie beneath every tree. Their owners are already scattered about the turf, while hundreds of negroes are ready, within and without the circle, pushing forward wherever there is promise of novelty, and anxious to emulate their betters in perilling every sixpence in their possession on the legs of their several favorites. There is a yet greater attraction for these in the huge white tent, spread at one extremity of the area; over which hang, in greasy and tattooed folds, the great stripes and stars of the nation. The attraction here is a novelty. It is a company of circus-riders. Their steeds, gayly caparisoned, have already gone in clamorous procession over the course to the sound of music; a thousand negroes have followed at their heels. Their exercises begin at the closing of the races, which cannot possibly take place before the afternoon. The interval to these is one of the most trying anxiety; to be soothed in part only by the events of the race. For this, the preparations are actively in progress. A glance at the opposite extremity of the ring, where the judges have a rude but elevated structure, not unlike a Chinese pagoda, shows us a handsome sprinkling of other visitors, on horse and foot. Many of these have a deeper interest

in the progress of the day than arises from simple curiosity. There are the sportsmen, the jockeys, the owners of horses, their admirers, riders, and those who, in some way, look to the future with some selfish consideration. They dart about in large survey, or crowd in groups around some favorite steed or speaker. There, you may see a dozen around the drum, whose office it is to give the signal which sets horse and man in motion; and not far distant, you may behold the amateur fifer that perambulates merrily by himself, discoursing through his instrument, somewhat imperfectly, of Robin Adair and Roslyn Castle. Others, again, are more busily and officially employed. They are weighing steed and rider, measuring the track, taking down bets and entries, and, altogether, looking and behaving as if the next movement of the great globe itself depended upon the wise disposition which that moment should make of their affairs.

Looking beyond this circle, and the prospect is equally encouraging. The eye naturally falls first upon the imposing *cortège* of the higher classes. Here you perceive, in coach, carriage, barouche, and buggy, that the upper ten thousand are tacitly permitted by the multitude to form a little community to themselves. The vehicles crowd together, as if in sympathy, the carriage-poles interlacing; the horses withdrawn and fastened in the shade of neighboring thickets. Here, seated in their carriages, appear the ladies, as various in their ages as in their separate style of beauty. They form close compact knots, or circles, according to the degrees of intimacy between them, and jealously force out all intruders; leaving such avenues only as will permit the approach on horseback of their several attendants and gallants. Showily and richly dressed, and surrounded by these dashing gentry of the other sex, all well mounted and eager to show their horsemanship, they give to the scene a gayety and brilliance which wonderfully add to its life and animation. Their gallants whirl around them with anxious attentions; now fly off to ascertain

the course of events, and now dash back, at full speed, to report progress. They describe and designate the horses to the delighted fair ones, direct them in their choice of favorites, and lose to them glove and ribbon with the happiest gallantries. You may note the emblems and badges upon each fair bosom; these are white and pink, and red and green; they designate the colors of the selectest horses; and *beauty*, in this way, does not feel mortified at being made tributary to the *beast*.

The more numerous multitude, if less attractive in their exhibitions, are much more various and not less imposing. A glance to the right confines the eye to a crowd in the midst of which a wagon appears, surmounted by a red streamer which waves twenty feet high from the peak of a pine sapling. The shaft is rigidly held in its perpendicular by the embrace of a group of barrels, from one of which the more abstemious may obtain a draught of domestic cider or switchel; while from another, the stronger head imbibes his modicum of whiskey or apple brandy; a poor Western apology for Irish *potteen*, which, after the first season, our Patrick learns to swallow with something of the relish with which he smacked his lips upon the brown jug in his native island. Other wagons and flags appear, each in the margin of the thickets, sheltered by its shade, yet not hidden from the eyes of the thirsty and hungry citizen. They divide themselves, according to their experience, between the several wagons; and it's—

“Ha, Uncle Billy, and what have you got for a dry throat to-day?” Or—

“Thar you ar’, Daddy Nathan, as bright as a bead of brandy, always bringing something for a tharsty sinner!” And Uncle Billy responds with a smile:

“Yes, Joel, my son, and it’s I that’s never too old for the sarvice;”—or, Daddy Nathan shouts back, with the voice of a “blood-o’nouns,”

“And what would you hev’, you great jugbelly with a double muzzle? Ain’t I here for the saving of such miserable sinners as you, that never think you’re half

full till you're fairly running over and can't run no more. Ride up, and see if you can find the way to your own swallow. Here's the stuff that'll make you open your mouth, though your eyes never seed it; as a hungry pike jumps up for the bait, jest because his nose tells him it's sartainly out somewhar' in the pond."

Then comes the rugged wit in answer, fashioned after the same model; a mild, good-humored banter; ending with a summons to the boys, to "come up to the rack," and try the peach or apple brandy, the whiskey or the cider, each according to his taste, of the uncle or the daddy.

"Whose treat?" demands two or three in the same breath.

"Who's but Joel Norris's?" or Pete Withers's, or Ben Climes's, or some other well-known boy of the masses, whom they have learned to reverence for that equal freedom of hand which enables them, with just the same readiness, to bestow buffet or beverage, according to the mood of the moment, or the character of the provocation given. And thus the groups form; and the meeting leads to the drinking; the drinking to the betting; and they part, or group themselves together, busy, from the moment in which they appear upon the field; much more earnest in the pursuit of fun than in the prosecution of their daily tasks.

He must be of difficult taste, indeed, whom such a theatre will fail to satisfy. Yonder, upon the grass, sit a cluster of rustic damsels. They are only spreading their baskets of cakes, *gunjas*, as they call them, and boiling huge vessels of coffee. Beyond them, at a little distance, appear others of the sisterhood, busy in preparing their tables with plate, knife, and fork. Towards noon you will see them smoking with hot dishes, and well surrounded by hungry gamesters. Cards and dice already begin to interest other parties, that crouch away in remoter places along the skirts of the wood; and the more personal matters of "poker" and "old sledge" render many an ardent spirit momentarily in-

different to the approaching horserace, upon which he has no sixpence left to stake. You will see him start to his feet as the shouts of the crowd without, and the rush of the horses, announce the approach of the contending steeds; but a glance suffices; and, satisfied that he neither wins nor loses by the event, he sinks down upon the turf or log, and renews the game of "brag" with fresh *nonchalance* and audacity.

Look, now, at the ring forming within the wood, where an eager circle encourage two rivals to a stand-up wrestle. They are stripped to the buff; the broad breast, and full, rigid muscle, promising a noble struggle. They approach with equal deliberation and good-humor, and the hug is fairly taken. They pause, and each lifts the other from his feet; and now they bend to it and wave to and fro, like tall saplings shaken adversely by capricious winds; now yield, now recover; a stern, close issue, very doubtful to the bystanders, who, soon forgetting their individuality, unconsciously follow the wrestlers in all their contortions, and, before they know where they are, glide into the ring and into the embrace of well-matched opponents, with whom they tug and tumble about without a single word of preliminary. In the shade of yonder avenue, you see a couple attended by their admiring followers, coats and shoes cast off, hands clasped, and about to dart forward in a foot-race of a hundred yards. Beyond them, still farther in the wood, you are called upon to witness a trial of skill between the crack rifles of two adjoining counties, of whom their respective friends have been boasting for several seasons. They have now, for the first time, been brought together. A race-turf, like that of Hilla-bee, will assemble the best fellows of several counties upon extraordinary occasions. They have planted a dollar at eighty yards. Could a shilling be seen at that distance, the smaller coin had been preferred.

And thus the field is laid off and divided. Thus the parties group themselves throughout the day, except when the race is of peculiar interest, when all small

matters are necessarily merged in the one result. But many wander about nearly listless, who depend for their pleasures rather upon the sports of others, than because of any direct participation with them. These sway to and fro at every summons that promises novelty or excitement. Now, there are sounds of strife and clamor, that declare a fight; and they hurry with open-mouthed delight to the scene of action. Now, a barrel of whiskey rolls from the wagon, and the owner, attended by the yells of a delighted circle, prances and rolls over it to his own confusion. Now a table of plank yields beneath the elbows of the guests, and the bacon and the pans go over with the company into the sand; and now an ill-trained horse bolts from the track, and scatters the clustering group of terrified spectators, compelling them to a use of their heels not less eccentric than his own. So much for the general aspect of the race-course at Hillabee on the memorable day in question. But it is high time that we should be more particular, and concentrate our regards upon those personages in whom our reader is expected to take the deepest interest.

CHAPTER IV.

FLATS AND SHARPS.

A RACE-COURSE has its music; at all events, we are now among the flats and sharps. Here you see, on a small scale, some of those characters who, on a more extended field, and with better training, might become famous financiers, or equally famous diplomatists. Here you may encounter some inglorious Rothschild, and witness instances of petty dexterity in policy which might honor Metternich. Look you now, for example, at the person who approaches us. His shabby exterior and lounging manner would hardly fix your attention, unless you were first assured that there was a meaning under it; mark him closely, and you will discover a certain significance in his eye and bearing which shows that he has his object. He is not the stolid indifferent that he seems to the casual observer. His eye, shrouding his glances as he may under the heavy penthouse of his bushy brows, is that of the hawk, as, wheeling aloft, he casts sidelong glances upon the covey of partridge that crouch along the bramble thicket. His quiet, cool, and easy carriage; the half smile that plays about his mouth, while his face presents a dull, unmeaning gravity; his manner, at once listless and observant; his evident acquaintance with everything and everybody; and the fact that, while he seems to seek nobody, he is seldom himself without a follower; all declare a character and talent of his own. But, what sort of talent? The scene in which he appears so entirely at home, and the costume which he wears, present us with a clue to his secret. He is one of the heroes of the turf. This, though on a somewhat humble scale, is the scene of his

victories. He knows every race-course and horse of heels in Georgia; knows every jockey, and his dimensions; and, a well-known *sharp* himself, his constant study is to extend his acquaintance among the *flats*, who are too numerous in every country to be so easily canvassed. His province is, particularly, horseflesh. He knows clean heels, at a glance. He reads the speed of an animal in his eye, and its bottom in its quarters; and knows the art, as well as any man, of so disguising a horse as to deceive the eyes of other judges. This is exclusively his world. His library is the stables; his place of worship is the race-course; his prayer-book, the little dirty envelop of loosely folded sheets, rudely stitched together, in which he notes his bets, and records his obligations. His costume speaks, however, for nothing of his method, though it sufficiently declares his character. His trousers are loose; hang about his hips, without suspenders, something like a sailor's; and are occasionally jerked up for the purpose of a brief interview with the short and open vest that hangs somewhat distantly above; the legs are thrust into his boot-tops, which are themselves wofully in need of covering, torn at the sides, and crushed down upon the ankles. His hunting-shirt has seen like service; the fringe is dilapidated, the cape half torn away. His cap, which rests jauntily on one side of his head, has its own fractures; the peak of it flapping, with a constant threat of departure, over his left eye. The vest flies wide, in consequence of the entire absence of its buttons. His breast is partly bare, from a like condition of his shirt-bosom; and the greasy black kerchief, which is wrapped about his neck like a rope, with the ends almost hanging to his middle, has suffered the shirt-collar, on one side, to escape entirely from its folds. You would suppose him the poorest devil on the ground. But that is his policy. He is a *chevalier d'industrie*. He lives by his wits; but these are so much capital; they command capital. Note him, where he goes, and you see that he is still followed by another, whose externals are

quite unlike his own. This is a tall, good-looking stranger, from another county; well dressed,—rather too much so,—and with quite a fashionable manner. He finds the capital, while his pilot finds the wit. Still, they do not seem to work together. The stranger does not too closely follow on the heels of his associate. He suffers him to keep ahead, and somewhat distant, but never loses him from sight. He is simply convenient when the fish is to be taken, and suffers the other to proceed after his own designs without interruption or communication. Let us follow, for a space, our first acquaintance. How quietly and successfully he makes his way among the crowd; without any effort at doing the agreeable, he is yet everywhere received as a favorite. He has a good-humored speech for all, and knows just the subject which appeals most directly to the fancies or the feelings of each. He is, in fact, a nobleman, from whom more pretentious persons of this order might well receive a few lessons.

“Well, Burg,” he says to one, whose ear he first tickles with the end of the whip which he carries, and who turns only at the voice of the speaker, “so ‘Betsey Wheeler’ died of the staggers?”

“Ah! Ned; yes. She did, poor thing, she did!”

“Good heels had ‘Betsey’ for a quarter stretch. That was a most beautiful run she made with Latham’s ‘Buz-zard.’ ”

“Worn’t it, Ned?” responded the man addressed, with a delighted expression of countenance, as he clasped the hand of the new-comer. “Ah! she was a critter. My darter hain’t got over the loss of the mar’ yet.”

“She *was* a mare!” was the emphatic reply of Ned. “She hasn’t left many with cleaner heels behind her, Burg.”

The latter was greatly flattered.

“Ah, Ned,” said he, “you’re the man to know when a horse *is* a horse!”

“You’ve got her filly?”

“Sold her to Captain Barry.”

"Ah! You shouldn't have done so. Is he here to-day—Barry?"

"Yes, I reckon."

"Has he the filly yet?"

"Yes, that he has; and will run her, too; for he counts her about as good flesh for a brush as any four-year old in the county."

"If she's like her dam, Burg, she can't help it!"

"As like as two peas from the same hull; only, I'm thinking, she has a little more bone than 'Betsey.'"

"So much the better. That's where 'Betsey' failed."

No more was said between the parties. Our acquaintance passed on: the next moment his follower came up with him, sufficiently close to catch the whispered sentence—

"I put a spoke in there that'll help to make the wheel. Barry's a fool! and Burg will tell him everything I've said."

The other falls back, and our jockey pursues his way, until, stopping short, he applies his whip, with a gentle cut, to the shins of a person; who, leaning against a sapling, betrays but little interest in what passes. He turns gently round at the equivocal salutation, and, as he encounters the features of the assailant, his words and looks of defiance give place to those of banter and good-humor.

"Halloo, there, monkey! ain't you afeard of that tail of your'n getting in the wolf-trap?"

"No, Jake; for I know you hain't got the teeth to raise the skin of that varmint."

"Hain't I, then? Just you try it, then, with another sort of look in your face, and see if I ain't a peeler."

"Will you peel?"

"Won't I, then?"

"Jake, my boy, I've come here to-day to strip the skin off you altogether."

"You! Tain't in your skin to do it, Ned."

"Yes, or there's no snakes. I'm here with the best nag at a heat that ever was seed in Hillabee."

"Oh, shut up! Where's the cow?"

"She's out in the bushes; I'll show her, when the time comes. They call her 'Graystreak;' and she does go it like lightning. Now, didn't I hear, from some old buzzard that never found out the value in a horse until he come to be carrion, that Lazy Jake Fisher had something of a nag, with three legs, or more?"

"Didn't you hear? Yes, that you did, Ned Ramsey; and there the critter stands; 'Crazy Kate,' they call her; but she does her running sensible. There's no crazy in that. She's the mare to strike your 'Graystreak' all in a heap, and take the shine out of her, or any animal you ever crossed."

"What!" said the other, following the direction, and with the most contemptuous curl of the lip, and wave of the uplifted whip. "What! you don't mean that poor old bay, yonder, that looks as if she hadn't shed hair, or tasted corn, since the beginning of the Seminole war? Why, Jake, the poor beast looks more like lying down on her last legs, and begging a judgment upon her master. You've starved her, Jake, I reckon; and she only keeps on her legs by the help of her halter. Just you let down the critter's head now, and all natur' couldn't keep her up till you'd half curried her."

"Say no more, Ned, till the run's over. We always know'd you was a nice person to say hasty things of other men's cattle. If 'Crazy Kate' can't stand, it's because she prefers to run. But we'll go and look at this 'Graystreak' of your'n; and I'll tell you, when I set eyes on her, what we'll be doing. I didn't know you had such a horse. When did you get her, and whar's she from?"

"She comes from Mississippi. I traded for her with a man named Myers, that brought her out. But she's to pay for herself, yit; and that's one reason why I'm greedy for Hilibee. So get ready to shell out handsome."

"Yes, empty the chist, Jake! Go your death on the bay mar', old fellow. I don't reckon she'll find her"

match on this ground to-day." So cried one of his neighbors.

"I reckon you think yourself a judge of horseflesh, Owens?" quietly said Ned Ramsey.

"I reckon, then, I do. I ought, by this time!" was the answer.

"Well! if a man's judgment's worth anything, it's worth what he's got in his pocket."

"Guess it is; and I'm willing to come down a trifle on Jake's bay mar', though I never seed your critter."

"That's coming out, like a man. But you shall see her."

"On sight, on seen, same to me. I'll go all I've got on the bay, whether or no!"

"That's right! into him, Charley Owens. He's a suck," cried one of the bystanders.

"He'll dive, if you shoot," said another.

"A suck! Yes! that's it," responded Ned Ramsey, very coolly. "Ready for any bait, boys, with a swallow that never refuses. I'll dive too, that's cla'r; but you may let drive first, and I'll carry off your load if I can. Load for buck, if you please. The larger the shot, the better. Here's 'Graystreak' agin 'Crazy Kate,' or agin the field. Who cares? The nag's got to be paid for. Here's steam agin wind! I'm wanting money mightily. Who'll sweat for the sake of charity? Here he stands; the Georgy railroad agin, besides a line of stages. Whar's the passengers?"

"Into him, Charley Owens!"

"Deep as I can go," said Charley, pulling out a greasy pocketbook, and laying bare its contents; no great matter; in bills and silver, some nine dollars thirty-seven cents, chiefly Georgia and Carolina currency. It was instantly covered from one of the pockets of Ned Ramsey, who cries out for more customers.

"But whar's the gray mar' all this time?" demanded Lazy Jake.

"It's a bite!"

"A bite! It's your bite, then," answered Ramsey,

at this outcry. "You've jaw enough, I reckon, for any sort of bite. As for the critter, look out, boys, there she comes. Yonder's the gray; a foal of the hurricane, sir'd by a streak of lightning."

"Hurrah for Ned Ramsey; he can go it!"

"Graystreak" was now brought up by a groom.

"Thar she stands, ready to fly. Thar's legs for you, and a head and neck to make a pretty gal jealous. There's no want of heels whar the sire was the lightning. No want of wind, with the hurricane for a dam! Ain't she a beauty, Jake?"

"A decent-looking thing enough, but not a crease to 'Crazy Kate.'"

"You say it? Well, chalk up your figure!"

"Cover that V."

"Thar it is, and I'm willing to face its brother."

"It's a go!" cried a huge-handed fellow, who called Jake "uncle," unfolding a greasy bank-note of the same denomination.

"What the dickens!" cried another, interposing; "can't I have a grab at some of them pretty pieters? I believe in Uncle Jake, too. I've seen 'Crazy Kate's' heels before, at a three-mile stretch, and I'll back her agin a five myself."

"Will you!—you're a bold fellow," answered Ramsey, as he began to fish up the contents of his pockets. It seemed low-water mark with him, and his bank-notes began to give place to a curious assortment of commodities, which he brought up very deliberately, and without any blushing, from the capacious depths of two enormous breeches-pockets. There were knife and gimlet and fishhook; whistle, button, and tobacco; gun-screw, bottle-stopper, and packthread, and a dozen or more of pea-nuts. It was only here and there that the pieces of money turned up; a quarter eagle, a few Mexicans, and a couple of dollars, in small silver, making their appearance somewhat reluctantly, and contrasting oddly enough with the other possessions of our jockey. These were soon brought together, and, the sum ascertained, it was

quickly covered by friends of Jake Owens, who had a faith in his creature. Owens was quite a knowing one in the estimation of his friends, and so indeed was Ramsey; but "Crazy Kate" had shown herself a "*buster*," and her very *loggish* appearance led the crowd to expect a great deal from an animal whose own looks promised so little, while her sagacious owner seemed to expect from her so much. Her skin really looked unhealthy; she carried her head low, almost between her legs; and her eye drooped sadly, as if with a consciousness of the disappointment which she was about to give her friends. But all this was regarded as deception by the backers of Uncle Jake. It was known what arts the cunning sportsman employed to disarm the doubts of the gullible: and the matted mane of "Crazy Kate;" the coarse, disordered hair; sorted, rough hide, and sullen carriage, were only regarded as results of a shrewd training and preparation, by which the more completely to take in the "flats." Very different was the appearance of "Graystreak." She did look like a thing of speed and mettle. She was clean-limbed and light of form, with a smooth, well-rubbed skin, and such a toss of the head, and such a bright glitter of the eye, that every one saw, at a glance, that her own conceit of her abilities was not a whit less than the conviction of her master in her favor. But this really made against her, in the opinions of the betting portion of the multitude, most of whom had, at one season or other of their lives, been taken in by just such a dowdy-looking beast as that of Lazy Jake Owens. Ramsey relied upon this result, or the appearance of "Graystreak" had been less in her favor.

"I reckon," said Ramsey, looking around him, "that I've hooked all the bait in these diggings."

"If you had anything that a chap might kiver," cried a greasy citizen, thrusting himself forward, and holding out a couple of shimplasters, of single dollar denominations.

"And who says I hain't?" answered Ramsey, as, with

his forefinger and thumb, he drew from his vest pocket a small supply of similar I O U's.

"Well, kiver *them*!"

"A short horse is soon curried."

"Are you man enough, Ned Ramsey, to curry a long one?" cried one from the crowd, who now pressed forward and appeared amid the ring. His presence caused a sensation. It was well calculated to do so. He was small of person; a lively, dapper-looking person, seemingly of gentle birth and of occupations which implied no labor;—a smooth, pale cheek, and a bright, restless black eye. His hair was long, and fell from under a green cloth cap, from which hung a gay green tassel; and several great rings might be seen upon his fingers. But the rest of his equipment was what fixed every eye. It consisted of a close-fitting jacket, with a short tail like that of a light dragoon, and small-clothes, all of scarlet, after the fashion of an English jockey, and his white-topped boots completed the equipment. The habit had been copied from an English print; and a good leg, and rather good figure, though *petit*, had justified, in the eye of vanity, the strange departure from all the customs of the country.

"It's Captain Jones Barry," says one of the spectators, in an under tone, to another who had made some inquiry: "He's rich enough to make any sort of fool of himself, and nobody see the harm of it." At the same moment, it could be seen that Ned Ramsey exchanged significant looks with the well-dressed stranger, who had been his shadow through the morning, as if disposed to say, "This is our man."

"I say, Ned Ramsey," cried Barry, "are you man enough to curry a large horse? I've seen your nag; she's a pretty creature, that's true; but I know something of Jake Owens's 'Crazy Kate,' and I don't care if I could put a customer on her heels, against your'n."

"You don't, eh! well, Squire Barry, you're a huckleberry above my persimmon, but I reckon something can be done. I believe in 'Graystreak,' and will go my

death on her. 'Twon't take much to bury me, that's true; but what thar is—"

"There! can you roll out against that?" asked Barry, as he laid a fifty dollar note upon his palm.

"'Twill go hard to drain me dry, but I ain't to be bluffed, neither; and though it takes from what I put away to pay for the nag, here's at you!" and the required amount was brought forth; but this time it came from a side pocket, in the coat of Ramsey, who, it was observed, seemed to find some difficulty in detaching it from its place of security. Lazy Jake Owens was not insensible to this demonstration. It seemed to open to him new views of the case, and he now proceeded to re-examine the strange animal upon which so good a judge as Ned Ramsey had so much to peril. But the newcomer, whom we shall know hereafter as Squire Barry, was not similarly impressed with the proceeding.

"Too much," said he, "for 'Crazy Kate,' Ned Ramsey! I have a nag of my own, as nice a little bit of filly as is on the ground to-day. I reckon you never saw or heard of her. Her name was 'Betsey Wheeler,' a crack mare of this county, and her sire was a New Orleans horse, whose name I now forget."

"I know the mar' you speak of," answered Ramsey, looking up, but without appearing to discover the man Burg, who stood behind Barry, and to whom he had spoken of this same mare an hour before in terms of exceeding admiration. "The mar', 'Betsey Wheeler,' *was* famous at a hunt. I can't say for the filly; I don't know that I ever seed her. But you can tell me what about her, Squire?"

"She's mine, and I believe in her; I believe in her against your 'Graystreak,' there: that I do!"

"Well, Squire, you have a right to believe in your nag; she's your own, and you know her. 'Graystreak's' mine, though not quite paid for yit, and I've a notion that I've a right to believe in her; she's got the heels to believe in. But what's the use of believing when every *pictur* (bank-note) that you have has got its

fellow already? If you was to go your belief *very strong*, I couldn't say a word agin it!"

"What say you to another fifty?"

"It's tough, but let's see your filly; if she's much like her dam," hesitating.

"What! scared, old fellow?"

"No! not exactly skeared, but a little dubious! I know'd the dam; *she* was a clean-heeled critter."

Looking up, he pretended to discover Burg, the former owner of the filly, for the first time. "Ah!" said he, "Burg, you're a keener." Barry looked gratified. He exulted in the notion that he had bluffed the bully; and Ramsey walked forward, with a side-long air, switching his whip as he went with the manner of a man half discomfited. He was pinned suddenly by Lazy Jake Owens, who had just returned from a reinspection of "Graystreak."

"Ned," said the latter in a whisper, calling him aside, "I see your game! We've got but three V's on this brush; if you'll let me, I'll take the fence and say quits?"

"What, hedge?" said Ramsey; "no you won't!"

"It's as you please; but, if this bet's to hold, you don't do Jones Barry."

"You'll not put your spoon into my dish, Jake?"

"I won't be dished myself if I can help it."

"Well! I'll let you off, if you'll let your nag run. Keep your tongue, and you may keep your V's."

"It's a bargain—mum's the word!"

"Do you know this filly, Jake?" said Ramsey, half aloud, as he saw Barry approaching.

"A nice critter to the eye, but I never seed her run. Her dam was a beauty for a mile stretch or so."

"There she stands!" cried Barry; "I'll back her against the field for any man's hundred."

"I'll take you!" quickly responded the stranger, who was Ramsey's shadow.

"Who's he?" inquired Ramsey, in a whisper of Barry himself.

"I don't know him at all," answered Barry. "But I reckon he'll show his money."

"I'm ready to cover, sir," was the remark of the stranger, showing his money just as if he had heard the whispered reply of Barry to Ramsey. The bet was taken down, and the bill covered in the hands of a third person. Ramsey did not linger to behold these proceedings, but occupied himself in a close examination of Barry's filly. The eye of the latter, with an exultation which it could not conceal, beheld the grave expression in that of the jockey. He saw the head of the latter shaken ominously.

"Isn't she a beauty, Ramsey? I call her the 'Fair Geraldine,' after the most beautiful lady in the world."

"You're right, to pay the filly such a compliment. She's the most sweetest little critter! Will you sell her, squire?"

"Sell her; no! not for any man's thousand dollars."

"You'll not get *that*, I reckon. But she's got the heels; that's cla'r! she'll run!"

"Will she? well! Can she *do* 'Graystreak?' "

"N—o! I don't exactly think she can."

"You don't? well! Can 'Graystreak' *do* her?"

"Y-e-s! I reckon."

"You reckon? well! If such is your reckoning, I suppose you're ready to match your mind with your money. What'll you go, on the match?"

"Well, squire, you see I'm quite clear up. Bating what I've put aside to pay for 'Graystreak,' I don't suppose I've got more than a single Mexican or two. I might raise three, or, *prehaps*, five upon a pinch; but I shouldn't like to go more."

"Be it five, then," said Barry, eagerly; and the seemingly reluctant pieces were fished up to the light out of the assorted contents of the deep pockets of the jockey.

"Now," said Barry, tauntingly; "what's the value of a horse, if you're afraid to risk on her? You say you've got money to pay for 'Graystreak?' How much did you give for her?"

"Oh! that's telling, squire."

"Well, I don't care to know; but how much have you made up towards paying?"

"Well, a matter of seventy-five or eighty dollars left."

"Which might be a hundred. But whatever it is, Ned Ramsey, I'm clear that if you valued the heels of your horse at all; if, indeed, you were not frightened, you'd see it all covered before you'd be bantered off the course."

"Squire, you're a little too hard upon a fellow," was the somewhat deprecating reply.

"Oh! it's the turn against you, then, Ramsey," was the retort of Barry. "You had the laugh and banter against everybody before. Well! you can taste the feeling for yourself. Now, if you're a man, I banter you to empty your pockets on the match; every fip down; and I cover it, fip for fip, and eagle for eagle. I'm your man, Ramsey, though you never met with him before."

It was with the air of the bully, desperate with defeat and savage with his apprehensions, that Ramsey dashed his hands into his bosom, drawing forth, as he replied, a pocketbook which had hitherto been unshown—

"I'm not to be bantered by any man, though I lose every picayune I have in the world. I'm a poor man, but, make or break, thar goes. No man shall bluff me off the track, though the horse runs off her legs. Thar, squire, you've pushed me to the edge of the water, and now I'll go my death on the drink. Thar! Count! Ef my figuring ain't out of the way, thar's one hundred and five dollars in that heap!"

"That's the notch," said a bystander, as the bills were counted.

"Covered!" cried Barry, with a look of exultation. He had obtained a seeming victory over the cock of the walk. The more sagacious "Lazy Jake Owens," however, muttered to himself, with the desponding air of one who was compelled to acknowledge the genius of the superior:

"A mighty clever chap, that Ned Ramsey, by the hokey! His mar' is paid for this day, if he never paid for her before."

Barry, cock-sure of the result, now slapped his pocket-book with the flat of his hand, as he lifted it over his head, and cried to the circle around him:

"There is more money to be had on this match, gentlemen. Here are a couple of bran new C's (hundreds) ready for company. Who covers them against the 'Fair Geraldine?'"

The stranger, the distant shadow of Ramsey, again modestly approached with two similar bank-notes already in his hands. The bets were closed.

"I must find out who that stranger is," muttered Ramsey, in the hearing of Lazy Jake Owens and Barry. The latter did not seem to hear or to attend to him; but, as he walked away, Lazy Jake whispered to Ramsey:

"If so be you ain't pretty well knowing to each other a'ready, Ned."

The latter simply drew down the corner of his eye, in a way that Lazy Jake understood, and the parties dispersed in search of other associates and objects. The scene we have witnessed was but a sample of that which was in progress, on a smaller scale, perhaps, all over the field. It needs no farther description.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH THE FLEETNESS OF HORSES, AND THE CAPRICES OF WOMEN, ARE EQUALLY CONSIDERED.

WE left our two sworn friends on the road, rushing forward, at a pleasant canter, for the race-course. They were within a mile of it, when they were joined by one who came forth suddenly from a private avenue through the woods, which conducted to his homestead. The parties at once recognized each other as old acquaintances. [The stranger was a good-looking person of thirty; not exactly one whom we should call a gentleman, but a frank, hearty, dashing, good companion, such as one likes to encounter at muster-ground or hunting-club. He was simply dressed in the habits of the country; not those of the plain farmer, nor those of the professional man. A loose, open hunting-shirt of blue homespun, with a white fringe, was not considered a habit too picturesque for the region, and it sat becomingly upon the large frame, and corresponded with the easy and not ungraceful carriage of the wearer. Tom Nettles was a character, but not an obtrusive one; a man, and not a caricature. He loved fun, but it came to him naturally; was something of a practical joker, but his merriment seldom left a wound behind it; his eyes were always brightening, as if anticipating a good thing, and they did not lose this expression even on serious occasions. Tom Nettles was much more likely to go into a fight with a grin on his visage than with any more appropriate countenance.] But let him speak for himself.

"Good morning, Miles; good morning, Hammond; you're on the road something late, are you not?"

His salutation was answered in similar manner, and Hammond replied to his inquiry:

"Something late? No! We are soon enough, I fancy."

"Quite soon enough for the race," said the other; "but Jones Barry rode by my house two hours ago, and stopped long enough to tell me that he was to be on the ground early to see Miss Geraldine Foster. He said you had both made the same promise, and he was bent to have the start of you. He seems to think it a rule in love matters, as in a barber-shop, first come first served, and the first comer always the best customer." Randall Hammond smiled, but said nothing; while Miles Henderson, taking out his watch, looked a little anxious as he remarked:

"We *are* later than I thought for."

"Soon enough, Miles," said Hammond, assuringly. Nettles continued:—

"But you should see the figure Barry has made of himself. He's dressed, from head to foot, in scarlet, and pretends that it's the right dress for a man that means to run his own horse. He says it's the dress of one of the English noblemen—I forget his name—who has grown famous on the turf. He owns, you know, that clever little filly of 'Betsey Wheeler,' that belonged to Burg Fisher. The dam was a good thing, and the filly promises to be something more, if Barry don't spoil her with his notions; and he's full of them. He means to run the filly to-day, and has christened her the 'Fair Geraldine,' after a young lady you know, both of you, I reckon. But, though he may get the lady, if he's not wide awake he'll be chiselled in the race; for Ned Ramsey is out, with his eye set for game, and he's too old a hand at the game not to *do* a young, foolish fellow like Jones Barry, with mighty little trouble."

The friends allowed their companion to talk. He was a person to use the privilege. They interposed a "no" or "yes," at intervals, and this perfectly satisfied him. Hammond, meanwhile, was good-humored in his replies, and quite at his ease. It was not so with Henderson. He referred to his watch repeatedly, and more than

once made a movement for going forwards at a pace more rapid than that into which they had fallen after Nettles had joined them. But his companions, on the contrary, seemed both equally determined not to second the movement. They hung back, and Hammond pointedly said—

“Don’t hurry, Miles. This good little fellow, Barry, attaches so much importance to his being first in the field, that it would be cruel to disturb his prospects.”

Nettles smiled. He understood the speaker, and knew equally well his character and that of his companion.

“If being in a hurry,” said he, “would win a lady, then Barry’s the boy for conquest. But there’s the mistake. It’s my notion that it’s the last comer that’s most likely to do the safe business, and not the first. A young girl likes to look about her. She soon gets used to one face and the talk of one man, and likes a change that’s something new. I wouldn’t be too late; I wouldn’t stay off till the very last hour; and I’d always be near enough to be seen and heard of now and then; nay, I’d like to be caught sometimes looking in the direction of the lady; but then I’d make it a rule never to be too soon or too frequent. It’s most important of all things that a man shouldn’t be too cheap. Better the girl should say, ‘I wonder why he don’t come,’ than ‘I wonder why he does.’”

Our philosopher of the piny woods might have gone on for a much longer stretch, had he not been interrupted by an event that gave a new direction to the party. They had reached a bend in the road which gave them glimpses of another which made a junction with it, and not fifty yards off they discovered the carriage of Mrs. Foster coming directly towards them. They at once joined it and made their respects, Miles Henderson taking the lead, and Hammond and Nettles more slowly following at his heels.

The party of Mrs. Foster consisted of that lady herself, her step-daughter, Miss Geraldine Foster, and her niece, Sophia Blane, a girl of twelve. Mrs. Foster was

an ill-bred, pretentious woman, who had succeeded the mother of Geraldine in the affections of her father, at a time when his feeble health and the impaired condition of his intellect rendered him too anxious for a nurse to be too scrupulous about a companion. He had raised her from an humble condition to one which she was ill calculated to fill; and, with the ambition to be somebody, she determined to carry her point by audacity rather than by art. She was a bold, forward beauty in her youth; was a bolder woman now, still pleasing in her face, but no longer a beauty; a woman given to petty scandals, and satisfied with petty triumphs; envious of the superior, malicious where opposed, and insolent when submitted to. What was defective or censurable in the manners of her step-daughter was clearly referable to the evil influence of this woman, and the doubtful training of the distant boarding-school to which she had been confided at a very early period of her life. That she was not wholly spoiled by these unfavorable influences, was due wholly to the native excellence of her mind and heart. She was a passionate, self-willed damsel; not easily rendered submissive in conflict; capricious in her tastes, yet tenacious of her objects; delighting in the exercise of power, without any definite idea of its uses or value; and by no means insensible to those personal charms which, indeed, were beyond all question, even of the hostile and the jealous. But, in opposition to these evil characteristics, she was magnanimous and generous; her heart was peculiarly susceptible to treatment and impressions of kindness. If her tastes were capricious, they at least were always directed to objects which were delicate and noble; if she was passionate, it was when roused by sense of wrong or supposed injustice; if she was slow to submit in conflict, she was never long satisfied with a victory, which a calmer judgment taught her was undeservedly won, and she knew how to restore the laurels which she had usurped, with a grace and a sweetness that amply compensated the injustice. Her mind was vigorous and active, and

this led to her frequent errors; for it was a mind untrained, and steadfast and tenacious of a cause which, it was yet to discover, was not that of truth and justice. She was a creature, indeed, of many contradictions; a wild, high-souled, spiritual, but capricious creature; the very ardor of whose temperament led her into tumultuous sports of fancy, such as only shock beyond forgiveness the staid and formal being to whom there is but one God, whose name is Fashion; but one law, the record of which is found only in what my neighbor thinks.

Randall Hammond was by no means insensible to her faults; but he ascribed them to the proper cause. He felt that she was a character; but a character which could be shaped, by able hands, into that of a noble woman and a faithful wife. He looked upon her with eyes of such admiration as the Arabian casts upon the splendid colt of the desert, whom he knows, once subdued by his art, he can manage with a whisper or a silken cord. But he strove—as earnestly as the Arab who conceals his purposes, and scarcely suffers the animal whom he would fetter to see the direct purpose in his eye—to keep his secret soul-hidden from the object of his admiration. He was not unwilling that she should see that she had awakened in his bosom an interest, a curiosity, at least, which brought him not unfrequently to her presence, but he strove, with all the success of a man who has a will sufficiently strong to subdue and restrain his passions, to guard his eyes and his tongue so that the depth of his emotions could not easily, or at all, be fathomed. It is sufficient here to say that Geraldine Foster was not insensible to his superiority. She had very soon learned to distinguish and to discriminate between her several suitors; but the bearing of Hammond, though studiously respectful, in some degree piqued her pride. If a suitor, he was not a servant. If he spoke to her earnestly, it was the woman, and not the angel he addressed. This reserve seemed to betray a caution which no maiden likes to detect in the approaches of her lover, and seemed to imply a de-

ficiency of that necessary ardency and warmth which was, in truth, the very last want which could be charged upon this gentleman. Mrs. Foster first insinuated this doubt into the bosom of her step-daughter, and the feeling of the consciously underbred woman made her studious in keeping up the suspicion. She was not satisfied with the superior rank of Hammond's family; was mortified at the coldness and distance of his mother, whom she well knew to have been intimate with the first wife of Mr. Foster; and, though the peculiarly respectful deportment of Hammond himself left her entirely without occasion for complaint, the very rigor of his carriage, the studious civility of his deportment, by restraining her freedom with his own, was a check upon that vulgar nature which is never satisfied till it can subdue the superior nature to its own standards. Mrs. Foster could say nothing against Randall Hammond; but she could not conceal her preference for all other suitors. Miles Henderson was decidedly a favorite; but there was a charm in the idea that Barry's fortune could positively "buy the Hammonds out and out," that inclined the scale of her judgment greatly in behalf of the latter. But we are at the course, the horses are taken from the carriage, the three young men are in attendance, and Barry is approaching.

"Dear me, Captain Barry," exclaimed Mrs. Foster, "how splendidly you are dressed!"

"Is that your uniform in the militia, Captain Barry?" was the demand of Geraldine.

"They'd set him up for a scarecrow, if it was," said Nettles; "and he'd have to treat as long as the liquor lasted, before they'd let him down."

"O hush, Nettles; you're always with your joke at everything and everybody. I wonder what there is in my clothes for you to laugh at?"

"Not much, I grant you, while you're in 'em," was the reply. "But answer Miss Foster. She wants to know what uniform it is you've got on."

"Oh! it's no uniform, Miss Geraldine. This is the

exact suit worn by the Earl of Totham, at the last Doncaster races."

"You don't say that the Earl of Totham sent you his old clothes?" responded Nettles.

"No! no!" said Mrs. Foster. "I understand. Captain Barry has adopted a dress like that which the Earl of Totham wore at the Doncaster races. Well! I don't see what there is to laugh at in a costume borrowed from the best nobility of Europe."

"But who is the Earl of Totham?" demanded Hammond. "I know of no such title in the English peerage."

"No? But it may be in the Scotch, or Irish," said Mrs. Foster, anxiously.

"No. It belongs to neither. But it makes no great matter. We are in a free country, Captain Barry, and can wear what garments we please, in spite of the English peerage."

"Ay, and in spite of our neighbors, too, Captain Barry," said Geraldine.

"Yes, indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Foster, exultingly. "There's many of those who decry the fine equipments of superior fortune, who would give half their lives to enjoy them. Now I think, however strange it appears to our eyes, that this costume of the Earl of—what's his name?"

"*Tote-Ham!* I think," said Nettles, with a smirk; punning, with a vulgar accent, upon the first syllable. *Tote*, among the uneducated classes of the South, means "to carry."

"*Totham!*" continued Mrs. Foster, innocently. "Well, I repeat, this beautiful costume of the Earl of Totham appears particularly adapted to the use of gentlemen who are fond of field sports."

The eye of Barry brightened. He looked his gratitude.

"I agree with you, Mrs. Foster," answered Nettles; "the red would not suffer from an occasional roll among the soft crimson mire of our own clay hills; and as our

sporting gentlemen drink deep usually before they leave the turf, the prospect is that they become deeply acquainted with the color of the hills before they reach home."

"O, Mr. Nettles!" exclaimed the maternal lady.

"Nor is the advantage wholly in the color," continued Nettles, with great gravity. "The cut of the coat is particularly calculated to show off the fine person of the wearer. The absence of all skirt is favorable to the horseman; though I confess myself at a loss to guess what use to make of that little pigeon-tail dependence in the rear. I can scarcely suppose it meant to be ornamental."

All eyes followed the direction thus given them, and one of Barry's own hands involuntarily clutched the little puckered peak which stuck out in the most comical fashion above his hips. Barry began to suspect that he was laughed at, and Mrs. Foster interposed, to change the subject.

"You mean to run your horse and ride him yourself, Captain Barry?"

"That I do, Mrs. Foster; I have pretty nigh five hundred on his heels, and I'll trust to no rider but myself."

"Well, that's right; that's what I call manly," said Mrs. Foster.

"You have certainly a very beautiful creature, Captain Barry," was the remark of Geraldine, turning from a somewhat subdued conversation with Henderson, to which Hammond was an almost silent partner. "You gentlemen," continued the fair girl, "are to teach me how I am to bet. That is, you are to give me your opinions, which I shall follow as I choose. See, I have a world of ribbons here, and am prepared to wear all colors. Who has the best horses, and how many are there to run?"

"You hear of one, certainly, Miss Foster," said Nettles.

"Yes! and certainly Captain Barry rides a very beautiful creature."

"She has the legs of an angel," said Barry.

"Better if she had its wings, I should think," was the immediate remark of Geraldine.

"Very good, very excellent, Miss Geraldine; certainly, for a race, the wings of an angel might be of more service than its legs. But she will scarcely need them. Her legs will answer."

"Should she lose, Barry, you'll have to change her name. Do you know the name of this beautiful creature?"—To Miss Foster. She answered quietly—

"O, yes! I have heard how greatly I am honored; and, in truth, I shall feel quite unhappy if she does not win. I must certainly, at all hazards, bet upon my namesake."

"You may do it boldly!" said Barry, with confidence; "I'll insure your losses."

"Who'll insure you, Barry? Your chances will depend upon what takes the field!" quoth Nettles.

"Do you know the mare of Lazy Jake Owens, that they call 'Crazy Kate?'"

"I do! your filly can trip her heels."

"I know that! my 'Glaucus' shall do that. He's here, and will be ridden by little Sam Perkins. Well! here's, besides, Vose's 'Grayshaft.'"

"Pretty good at a quarter, but—"

"And Biggar's filly, 'Estella.'"

"Her dam, 'May Queen;' sire, 'Barcombe;' a good thing, but wanting bottom."

"Joe Balch's 'Nabob,' Zeph. Stokes's 'Keener,' and 'Flourish,' a gambol-looking nag from Augusta, or thereabouts."

"I know them all except the last. The 'Fair Geraldine' ought to give them all the wind."

"She'll do it!"

"But these are not all the horses out, surely?"

"No! there's another animal, that Ned Ramsey claims. I never saw her before, and don't think a great

deal of her now; they call her 'Graystreak;' she comes from Mississippi. I bluffed Ramsey so tightly that I almost scared him off the hill; but I brought him to the scratch, and I have covered for him to the tune of a hundred and more on the match between 'Graystreak' and 'Geraldine;' besides something like half the amount on Lazy Jake's mare against 'Graystreak.' "

"And where's this 'Graystreak?'"

The animal was only at a little distance. The proprietor, the renowned Ned Ramsey, was busy, at the moment, in preparing her for the course. The eyes of the party were directed to the beautiful creature in admiration. She shipped to the sun finely, as if clad in velvet. Her clean limbs, wiry and slender; the spirit in her eye, and the airy life in all her action, at once fixed the regards of so good a judge as Nettles. Nor was Randall Hammond indifferent to the beauty of her form, and the promise in her limbs.

"This fool and his money have parted!" said Nettles, in a whisper to Hammond. "*Your* horse is the only one that can take the legs from this filly, and it would give *him* trouble!"

The answer of Hammond was unheard, as they reapproached the carriage where the ladies sat.

"Well, gentlemen!" said Geraldine, impatiently; "I am eager to be busy. Come, let me have your judgment. What horse shall I adopt as my favorite?"

"Are you not fairly committed to your namesake?" asked Hammond, with a quiet manner; his eye, however, looking deeply into hers. She answered the gaze by dropping hers; replying quickly, as she did so:—

"No, indeed! the compliment to me must not be made to lose my money or discredit my judgment. For sure, Captain Barry himself has no such design to injure me. But I do fancy the beauty of his horse, and if you think her fleet, Mr. Hammond—"

• She paused:—

"The 'Fair Geraldine' is doubtless a very fleet, as she is a very beautiful creature!"

"But," said Nettles, finding that Hammond hesitated, "that strange mare you see yonder undressing, is sure to beat her."

"Sure to beat her!" exclaimed Barry, who drew nigh in season to hear the last words. "What'll you go on the word?"

"Horse, house, lands, ox, ass, and everything that is mine!"

"Nay, nay! to the point; look to your pocketbook!"

"Well, if you will have it, we'll say a hundred on the match; 'Graystreak' against any horse in the field, unless Hammond runs his 'Ferraunt,' and then 'Ferraunt' against the field!"

"'Ferraunt!'" said Barry; "what, the large iron gray he rides. Why, he came on him!" looking to Hammond inquiringly. The latter had yielded his horse to his groom, and was now sitting on the box of the carriage, the driver being withdrawn to look after his horses. "Ferraunt" was already groomed, and resting in the shade at a little distance under the charge of the servant. The finger of Nettles pointed where he stood. The eye of Geraldine at once followed the direction of his finger, and while Barry and Nettles arranged their stakes, and withdrew to look at "Ferraunt," a short dialogue, not without its interest, took place between herself and Hammond.

"Is your horse so very fleet, Mr. Hammond, as Mr. Nettles says he is?"

"He has the reputation of being a very fast horse, Miss Foster; indeed, he is probably the fastest on the ground."

"Well; you mean to run him, of course?"

"Why of course?"

"Oh, why not? To own a race-horse, indeed, seems to imply racing. What is the use of him otherwise?"

"One may love to look at a beautiful animal without seeking always to test his speed; at all events, without seeking to game with it."

"To game! Is not that a harsh expression, Mr. Hammond?"

"Perhaps it is, since gentlemen have not often the motive of gain when they engage in this amusement. It is as a noble and beautiful exercise of a beautiful animal that they practise this recreation, and not for its profits."

"Well; and *you* could have no eye to the gains, Mr. Hammond?"

"No. But how small is the proportion of gentlemen, governed by such principles, to those who usually collect at a scene and on an occasion like this! What a greedy appetite for gain does it provoke among thousands who have no other object, and find no pleasure in the exquisite picture of the scene—in the glorious conflict of rival blood and temperament—in the wild grace of the motion of the steeds—in all that elevates it momentarily into something of the dignity of a field of battle; who think only of the wretched results which are to fill or empty their pockets. And of these, very few can afford to win or lose. If they win, they acquire certain appetites from success, which usually end in their ruin; and if they lose—though more fortunate in doing so, as they are probably made disgusted with the pursuit—they yet rob their families of absolute necessities, in this miserable search after a diseased luxury for themselves."

"I confess I am no philosopher, Mr. Hammond. I don't see things in the same light with yourself, and can scarcely believe in such dreadful consequences from a spectacle that is really so fine and beautiful."

"Oh," said Mrs. Foster, interposing, sneeringly; "oh, Mr. Hammond, you get all those queer notions from your mother."

"You will permit me to respect the woman of my opinions, Mrs. Foster?" with a respectful but measured bow.

"Oh, surely. She's an excellent woman, and I respect her very much; but her notions on this subject

are very peculiar, I think; though, in her case, natural enough."

This was said with a degree of significance which did not suffer Hammond to misunderstand the speaker. His face was instantly and deeply suffused with crimson, as he felt the allusion to the fate of his father. His head was, for the moment, averted from the speaker. In that moment, the malicious woman whispered to her step-daughter, "At him again. I know where the shoe pinches."

A slight expression of scorn might have been seen to curl the lips of Geraldine. A pause ensued, which was at length broken by Hammond, who drew her attention to a showy procession of the pied horses, the calico steeds of the circus company. Some comment followed on the performances of the *troupe*, when the young lady, in the most insinuating manner, resumed, with Hammond, the subject of his own horse.

"But, Mr. Hammond, though you inveigh against racing as a practice, you can have no objection to running your horse, upon occasions, once in a way, as much for the satisfaction of your friends as with any other object. Now, I am quite pleased with your dark-looking steed. What do you call him?"

"'Ferraunt.'"

"Ah! his name indicates his color. He seems to me a military horse."

"I got him chiefly as a charger."

"Oh, yes; I forgot; you are a colonel of militia. But, for a charger, you need an animal at once high-spirited and gentle."

"He is both. That, indeed, Miss Foster, is the character of all high-blooded animals. The rule holds good among men. The most gentle are generally the most high-spirited—at once the most patient and the most enthusiastic. The race-horse, next to the mule, makes the best plough-horse."

"But that is surely a contradiction; the mule being the most dogged, stubborn, slow—"

"He need not be slow. He is only slow when broken and trained by a drowsy negro. But, though it seems a contradiction, as you say, to employ animals so utterly unlike for the same purposes, and to find them nearly equally good, it is one that we may, and perhaps must reconcile, on the principle that finds a sympathy in extremes."

"Mr. Hammond, it seems to me that all this is perversely intended to divert me from my object." A playful smile and arch manner accompanied this remark of the young lady. "But I am as perversely resolved that you shall not escape. Now, then, let me hear from you. Do you not intend that 'Ferraunt' shall run to-day?"

"I really do not, Miss Foster. I came out with no such purpose."

"I'm ready for you, colonel," was the remark of Jones Barry, who had just that moment reappeared with Nettles. "I'm not afraid of your 'Ferraunt,' though Nettles tells me he's good against all this crowd. I'm willing to try him. I don't believe in your foreign horses, when they come to this country; the climate don't seem to suit 'em. They're always sure to be beat by the natives; and, after the first talk on their arrival, you never hear anything said in their favor, and you never see anything they do. Now, your 'Ferraunt' comes of good stock, but he's awkward—"

"Awkward!" said Nettles; "ah! Barry, if you could only dance as well."

"Well, I'm willing to see him dance; and, if Col. Hammond chooses, I'll go a cool hundred on the 'Fair Geraldine' against him. There's a banter for you."

"I won't run my horse, Mr. Barry."

"What, bluffed off so soon?" said Barry, coarsely.

"Call it what you will, Mr. Barry; I don't run horses."

"But, Mr. Hammond, if you are content to underlie his challenge, you surely will not be so uncourteous as to refuse mine. The 'Fair Geraldine' against 'Fer-

raunt,' for a pair of gloves. I must maintain the reputation of my namesake."

"The 'Fair Geraldine' must excuse me, if my courtesy will not suffer me to accept her challenge."

"What! you pretend that your horse must beat?"

"I know it, Miss Foster."

"And what if I say that I don't believe a word of it? that I equally know that the 'Fair Geraldine' is the fastest horse? and I defy you to the trial? There, sir, my glove against yours."

This was all sweetly, if not saucily said. The eyes of Hammond were fixed gratefully upon the speaker; but he shook his head.

"You must forgive me, if I decline the trial in the case of my horse. But, if you will permit me, I cheerfully peril my glove against your favorite in behalf of 'Graystreak,' yonder."

"No, no, sir; your horse, your 'Ferraunt.'"

"You can't refuse, colonel," said Barry.

"No, Randall!" said Henderson.

"Impossible!" cried Nettles; who was anxious to see 'Ferraunt' take the field."

"A lady's challenge!" cried Mrs. Foster; "chivalry forbids that you refuse."

"I am compelled to do so, Miss Foster. It would give me pleasure to comply with your wishes, but I never run my horse, or any horse; I never engage as a principal in racing of any kind."

Nettles and Henderson both drew Hammond aside to argue the matter with him. They were followed by Barry, who was in turn followed by the jockey, Ramsey. Nettles had his arguments, which were urged in vain; and, when Henderson dwelt on the claims of the lady, Hammond replied, somewhat reproachfully:

"You know, Miles, that I shouldn't run a horse, were all the fair women in the world to plead."

"Well," said Barry, "what a man won't do for pleading, he may do for bantering. I'm here for that,

colonel, and I'll double upon the hundred against your foreign horse."

"I must decline, Mr. Barry; I'm no racer, and will not run my horse; but, let me assure you, sir, that your mare, though a very clever thing, could not hold her ground for a moment against him."

"Easy bragging," said Ramsey, with a chuckle, "when there's no betting."

"And as easy to lay a horsewhip over a ruffian's shoulder, sir, when he presumes where he has no business."

Ramsey disappeared in an instant; a roll of the drum followed, giving notice of the approaching struggle; and the desire to see "Ferraunt" on the ground, gave place, among the few, to the more immediate interest which belonged to the known competitors. Barry instantly hurried off to his groom and stable; Nettles sauntered away to the starting-post, while Henderson and Hammond returned to the carriage. The latter felt that the manner of Geraldine was changed. Her eye met his, but there was a coldness in the glance, which his instinct readily perceived; but, true to his policy, he suffered it to pass unnoticed; was respectful without being anxious, and attentive without showing too much solicitude.

"*You,*" said Geraldine to Henderson, "you, too, I am told, ride a fine and fleet horse; do you not intend to run him?"

"If Miss Foster desires it."

"Of course I desire it! What do you call your horse?"

"Sorella!"

"Sorella! a pretty name. Well, how does she run? Is she fleetier than my namesake?"

"What say you, Randall?"

"Oh, don't ask him! He will say nothing that'll please anybody. What's your opinion?"

"That 'Sorella' is too much for the 'Fair Geraldine!'"

"I'll not believe it; and I transfer to you the chal-

lence that your friend scorned, or feared to take up. Which was it, Col. Hammond?"

"Let us suppose *feared*, Miss Foster!" replied Hammond, gently, and with a pleasant smile.

"I don't know what to make of you, Col. Hammond. I wish I could make something of you. But I despair; I'll try no longer!"

"That you should have even tried, Miss Foster, is a satisfaction to my vanity."

"Oh, don't indulge it. It was not to give you any pleasure, I assure you, that I thought to try at all; only to please my fancy, and—"

"Still, I am gratified that I should, in any way, have contributed to this object."

"Nay! you are presuming; you torture everything I say into a compliment to yourself. But, hear me! if you won't run your horse yourself, let me run him. I'll ride him. I'm not afraid. I'm ambitious now of taking the purse from the whole field, and snapping my fingers at their Crazy Kates and Graystreaks, and even their Geraldines. Geraldine against Geraldine. How will Mr. Barry like it, I wonder; and that, too, at the cost of his hundreds. Cool hundreds, I think, he calls them; cool, I suppose, from being separated from their companions. Well! will you let me ride your 'Ferraunt?'"

"If you will suffer me to place him at your service when at home, Miss Foster!"

"No, no! I want a *race*-horse, not a saddle-horse; I want him *here*, not at home. Don't suppose I'm afraid to run him. I'm as good a rider, I know, as almost any on the ground, and—But say! shall I have him?"

"I dare not, Miss Foster; for your own sake, I dare not. But I feel that you are jesting only—"

"No, indeed! I'm as serious as I ever was. I don't know what you mean when you say you dare not, unless, indeed, you think—"

"Oh! don't ask Col. Hammond any favors, my child, he's so full of notions!" the step-mother again interposed, maliciously. Geraldine threw herself back in the car-

riage with an air of pique, and Henderson looked at his friend commiseratingly, as if to say: "You've done for yourself, forever!" The other seemed unmoved, however, and preserved the utmost equanimity. There was another roll of the drum; at this signal, Henderson held up a blue ribbon to Miss Foster, who drew from her reticule a crimson cockade with which the ingenious Mr. Jones Barry had provided her. This she fastened to her shoulder, acknowledging her sympathy with the colors of her namesake. Henderson, in another moment, disappeared, glad to have an excuse, in the commands of the lady, for showing off to advantage his equally fine horse and person.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RACE.—CROSS PURPOSES.

OUR preliminaries are all adjusted, and the moment approaches for the conflict. The eyes of all are now directed to the central point from which, at the tap of the drum, the contending horses are to start. The card-players desert their log beneath the shade-trees, the greasy pack being thrust into the pocket of one of the company till the more immediate object of interest is over. The rifle-shooters lean their implements against a tree, and seek the common point of attraction. The cooks leave their seething-vessels; the negroes hurry from their horses; all parties, high and low, big and little, crowd upon the track, pressing upon the ropes that guard the little space assigned to the running animals, and crowding absolutely upon their heels. The scenes that we have witnessed, in a few striking instances already, are in progress on a smaller scale everywhere. Bets are freely offered and taken, now that the horses are uncovered and in sight. The first animal that stripped for the examination of the judges, was a large horse of Jones Barry's, called "Glaucus," a great-limbed beast, that promised much more endurance than speed, and yet had the look of being too heavy to endure his own weight beyond a reasonable distance. His chances lay in the fact that the race in which he was to run was but a single mile, and his legs were quite sufficient for that. Yet "Glaucus" did not seem much of a favorite.

"An elephant!" cried one.

"Looks more like a gin-horse than a race-horse," said another.

"No go," said a third.

"Slow go," at least, quoth Tom Nettles, addressing Barry himself.

"Not so slow either; sure, rather."

"Yes, of the dust from other heels, if not of his own. I'll take 'Crazy Kate' against 'Glaucus' for a five, Barry; and the Mississippi mare against him two to one; say ten to five."

"I'm not to be bluffed, Nettles. I'm your man!"

"Grayshaft," a neat little creature of Dick Vose's, next vaulted into the space, and underwent the usual peeling. Light-limbed, clean-legged, and with a good glossy skin, "Grayshaft" won a good many favoring voices. "Estella," a filly of Ralph Biggar's; "Nabob," "Keener," and "Flourish," were severally brought forward, and had their backers. Each of them had some points to commend them. Some told in length and ease of legs; some in good muscle, in general carriage, in beauty of shape, in eye, head, and other characteristics. But the expression of admiration was much more decided, among the multitude, when "Crazy Kate" made her appearance in the space. Now "Crazy Kate" was remarkable for showing nothing calculated to persuade the casual spectator into a belief in her fleetness. She was, in truth, a very vulgar-looking beast, singularly unmeriting the appellation of "Crazy," as no creature could possibly have looked more tame. Her hair was coarse, confused, and rough, as if shedding; her mane was matted, and an occasional cockle-burr could be seen hanging among the bristles; but all these signs were regarded rather as the cunning devices of the old jockey, her owner, Lazy Jake Owens, than as at all indicative of her qualities of speed and bottom. The more knowing followers of the turf readily discovered, through all these unfavorable indices, the slender limbs, the wiry muscle, the strength and substance, which denoted good blood, agility, and fleetness. The contrast which the Mississippi mare presented to the ungainly externals of "Crazy Kate," was productive of a shout in her favor. "Graystreak" was the model

of a fine animal; perhaps wanting somewhat in height, but possessed of immense capacity, great muscular power, fine color; in limb, action, muscle, exhibiting largely the characteristics of high blood, speed, and great endurance. Her skin was glossy, her eye bright and steady; and she showed, in her movement, so perfect a union of spirit and docility, that you felt, at a glance, that her training had done full justice to her blood. There was no resisting the impression which she made. Barry himself felt it; but he relied upon the known cunning of Lazy Jake Owens, and was confident that still greater merits lay beneath the unkempt, uncouthly aspect of "Crazy Kate." Lazy Jake himself seemed as confident as ever; feeling sure in the private engagement with Ned Ramsey, which made *him* safe, at the expense of all his backers.

"You have now a good view of the horses that are to run, Miss Foster," was the remark of Hammond, venturing to arouse the damsel from something like a reverie. "They have already examined them, and weighed the riders. In a few moments, they will mount and be ready for a start. Suffer me to throw back the top of your barouche, when you can rise and see the whole field at a glance."

"Oh! do so, Mr. Hammond, if you please. Where do you say I shall look?" Geraldine eagerly rose as she spoke, and while Hammond threw back the top of the carriage, she scrambled forward upon the seat beside him, using his shoulder with the utmost indifference during the proceeding.

"Your favorite does not run this race, which is considered a less trying one than that which she will encounter. It is for a single mile stretch only, and repeat; and many a horse who would beat, in a longer conflict, would probably lose in this; while the winner, here, would be nothing in a contest which was continued for two or three miles at a stretch."

"And which of these horses will win the race; not that dowdyish-looking beast, surely?"

"She will do something towards it; more than most of

them; for the rudeness of her appearance is due rather to the small arts of her owner, than to her native deficiencies of beauty. She is not a handsome creature, but, well dressed, would be far from ugly."

"Fine feathers make fine birds, you would say," responded Geraldine, merrily, with a smile and toss of her own plumes.

"Exactly: but this poor beast is carefully disguised for the purpose of taking in the simple, who look to externals only. She is probably second best of the horses in the ring."

"And the first?"

"Is that sleek and quiet animal that stands immediately behind her. She is a strange creature from Mississippi, and is probably the best nag on the ground for fleetness and endurance."

"Your 'Ferraunt' excepted?" said the lady, slyly.

"My 'Ferraunt' probably excepted," was the somewhat grave reply.

"*I wish you would* run that horse, Mr. Hammond. For *my sake* you might."

This was said in somewhat lower tones than usual.

"For *your* sake, Miss Foster, I would do much; but there is a reason—but, hark! they are preparing for the start. You see that rider with the scarlet jacket. He rides the horse 'Glaucus,' another of Mr. Barry's racers. You see there are several horses in front, with different colors. Stand upon the seat, and you will better see them."

She adopted the suggestion; rose to the prescribed elevation, he keeping his place on the floor of the carriage, while her hand rested, as if unconsciously, upon his shoulder. In this manner, shading her eyes with the other hand, she directed her gaze upon the points to which he severally drew her attention.

"They are now all mounted. The white jacket and cap is the Mississippian; the blue is 'Crazy Kate.' Hark, now! The word—they are off!"

A thousand "hurrahs" from the multitude. The

excitement in the bosom of our damsel was scarcely less.

"They go! they are gone! Oh! mamma, do you see them? How they dart—how they fly! Where are they now, Mr. Hammond? I do not see. I cannot follow them!"

The start was a beautiful one, made at an equal bound, "Glaucus" and "Grayshaft" taking the lead; "Keener" and "Flourish" following close, and "Crazy Kate" and "Graystreak," with "Nabob," just hanging at their heels. Soon, however, the position of the parties fluctuated. "Flourish" made a dash, and flung her tail in the face of "Glaucus;" "Nabob" went forward till he locked him, and was, in turn, passed by "Crazy Kate;" the Mississippi mare breezing up with a gradual increase of velocity, evidently under the most adroit management of rein. "Glaucus" struggled bravely against this new adversary, and made a desperate push, which succeeded in throwing "Flourish and Nabob" out of the lead; but "Crazy Kate" still kept ahead, until her backers began to shout their exultation, when, to their consternation, the Mississippian flared up under a single application of the whip, and shot ahead as suddenly and swiftly as an arrow from the bow. She passed the string just a quarter of a length in advance of "Crazy Kate," who was just as closely pressed by "Glaucus" and "Grayshaft." These four horses seemed only so many links of the same chain, so equally close did they maintain their relationship at the termination of the brush. The other horses were considerably in the rear. The race was to the Mississippian, and the *flats* were feeling in their pockets. Lazy Jake Owens was somewhat scarce, and a long and dubious silence succeeded the wild shouts that relieved the suspense of the multitude.

"What horse has won, Mr. Hammond?"

"'Graystreak,' the Mississippian, Miss Foster!"

"But not greatly. It seemed to me that all the horses were together. If he won, it was scarcely by his own length."

"It sufficed: but he might have quadrupled that distance. But it was not the policy of his driver that it should be so. He is modest. He looks rather for success than triumph. He prefers the money to the fame. But the greatest contest follows, that in which your favorite takes the field."

"Yet the Mississippian will win, you say."

"Yes! he will prove too much, I suspect, for your namesake. He will not win so easily, however. Besides, Miles Henderson will run his mare, and she's a bright creature."

" 'Sorella?' "

"Yes! he *may* beat her; but she comes of the same blood with 'Ferraunt,' and if managed rightly—"

"It depends upon the rider, then?"

"Greatly! and I will see Miles on the subject."

"Really, Mr. Hammond, that you should know so much about horses, and yet refuse to take part in the struggle!"

"I love horses, Miss Foster; I delight in their beauty, and their movements are grateful to me. Perhaps but for certain reasons, which concern me only, I should be passionately fond of racing, and frequently engage in it. But my objections are insuperable. I *dare* not! But for this you should have been the mistress, this day, of all the movements of my horse."

He disappeared in search of his friend. Mrs. Foster sniggered, as he went. Seeing her step-daughter looking seriously, while her eyes followed the retreating form of Hammond, she said:—

"It's nothing but his pride and arrogance; it was so always with him, and with all his family. They delight in being perverse. His mother is just that sort of person; a cold, formal, conceited, consequential, old, stiff-capped somebody, that would be like nobody else. As for Randall Hammond, every one knows that he's a tyrant. He thinks he can do as he likes with women; that they're all so anxious to get him, that they'd submit to any dictation. But he'll find himself mistaken yet.

Now he loves you, Geraldine, quite as much as he loves or can love anybody; and when he finds he can't be master, he'll perhaps be willing that you should be mistress; but you'll have to make him feel that he's nobody first. He's a haughty, cold—"

"Oh! hush, mother; you know that you don't like him."

"No! I don't; not a bone in his skin, nor his old mother either. But what I say is true. You see for yourself, and you'll learn to see with my eyes before you see anything good in him!"

"I shall scarcely do so then. But the man's a man. He don't change. He's firm; and that's something. He don't flatter, either; and though that vexes me, yet I don't think the worse of him for it."

"Oh, yes! and he'll hear you singing yet—"

"When is he coming to marry me?"

"No, he won't! mother, nor any man. I don't care whether I marry or not. I don't see that marrying is so necessary; and I'm positively sick of hearing women talk of marriage, as if it was the only subject in the world to talk about."

"And so it is; a woman's nobody until she's a wife!"

"And then she's *one-body's*!"

"Yes! and then all's safe! But, if you're wise, you'll marry anybody sooner than a master."

"And when I submit that any man shall be my master, I shan't complain, be assured of it. But no more of it; for here comes your favorite, Captain Barry."

"I wish he were your favorite, too. He's the man; you can manage him like a feather."

"A feather, then, would be a good substitute for a husband!"

"Yes, indeed, if it adorns one's bonnet!"

"Hush!"

"Well, ladies! you see I've been unlucky," began Barry; "my 'Glaucus' just lost the race by a span. Jim Perkins rode him badly. He held in where he should

have let out, and I saw him looking behind, and jerking in, just when he should have used the whip. But that's nothing. I didn't count largely on this race. In the next, however, I'll ride 'Fair Geraldine' myself, and then we'll see after this 'Graystreak.' You saw the run? You saw that the 'Mississippian' and 'Crazy Kate' were both put to their best? Now I know that 'Geraldine' can gallop round 'Glaucus' at his speed. We'll see!"

"Well, remember, Mr. Barry, I've a fortune in gloves on my namesake."

"Never fear! never fear!"

"But Mr. Henderson's going to run his 'Sorella.'"

"Yes; I see him busy. He stands no chance. 'Sorella' is sister of 'Ferraunt;' 'Geraldine' can beat 'em both. I only wish we could get Hammond to come out with his iron gray. We'd show him! We'd take the conceit out of him!"

"What can be the reason of his reluctance?"

"Reason!" exclaimed the mother; "why, there's no reason, but his pride. He thinks horseracing vulgar."

"That can hardly be possible. Indeed, I'm sure, from what he said to me, that it is not pride. Besides, I'm not so sure that I can't persuade him to it yet."

"Indeed! you may give up that notion," said Barry. "He particularly told Nettles and myself that he wouldn't run his horse for you or any woman breathing."

"Said he that?" demanded Geraldine, while her eye flashed sudden fires of indignation, and her cheek flushed with the feeling of a slighted pride.

"To be sure he did; not twenty yards from your carriage; and when Nettles and Henderson were telling him that he could no longer refuse, after you had asked him."

"It was like him!" said the step-mother. "I hope you're satisfied now!"

The daughter was silent; and Mrs. Foster, satisfied with the step gained, was prudent enough to say no

more. Barry ran on for some time longer; but, finding that what he said was little heeded, he hurried away to the stand, and to make his preparations for the next great race.

Meanwhile, Hammond, unsuspecting the evil seed which had been planted in his absence, had sought out Henderson, in order to give him counsel in relation to the race. It may be said here, that Hammond was not only an excellent judge of the qualities of a horse, but that he particularly knew "Sorella." He had imported and partly trained her; and she had been his gift to Henderson, some time before. He now took the latter aside, and said to him—

"You are too heavy to ride 'Sorella' yourself, Miles, and can venture little against this Mississippi filly. I think that 'Sorella' can beat her in the long run, but only under a first-rate rider. Now, do you go over with me to the wagon of old Nathan Whitesides, whom I see here, and we will get his son, Logan, to ride for you. Logan is a first-rate rider, and has had frequent practice with 'Sorella.' He knows her, and, which is quite as important, she knows him. He is one of the most dextrous jockeys that I know, though he seems a simpleton. If any one, not myself, can beat 'Gray-streak' with 'Sorella,' it is Logan Whitesides."

The boy was sought, found, and employed. A few whispers in his ear, and Hammond left the parties; returning to the carriage of Mrs. Foster, seemingly no more concerned in the race than the most indifferent spectator. He resumed his seat quietly on the box of the barouche, but not before discovering that a change had taken place in the manner of Geraldine Foster. She was constrained in her answers, and totally incurious about the race. Not so the step-mother, who seemed to grow good-humored in due degree with the increased reserve and *hauteur* of the damsel. Hammond was a politician; he did not appear to discover any changes, and spoke as quietly, and offered his services and his information as unpretendingly as he had done before.

His manner was that of a gentleman who had nothing to gain, and is conscious of nothing to be lost; but who, in obedience to habitual training, defers gently to the sex, and shows that solicitude for the graces of society which makes one always willing to contribute to its amenities. It is not to be concealed, however, that he took advantage of the frequent provocations afforded by Mrs. Foster, to make himself particularly interesting. Without effort, he betrayed his resources of reading and observation. He was lively, without levity; various, without painstaking; and copious, without suffering himself to fall into tediousness. Gradually, the ear of Geraldine inclined to his voice. She forgot, in his conversation, the reported rudeness which had vexed her pride; and, by the time that the preparations were completed for the main race, she was again on the seat beside him. Mrs. Foster had not calculated on this result. She was chagrined to find that her conversation had brought out new powers in their companion, which could not fail to place him in favorable comparison with his rivals; and she was too vulgar a woman to know how to repair the evil unless by a positive rudeness, for which she was unprepared, and for which she could have no excuse. She sat silent, accordingly, leaving the field entirely free to Hammond; who, finding Geraldine a somewhat pensive listener beside him, adroitly addressed the sentiment which was uppermost in her thoughts, and confirmed, still more profoundly, the impression he had made. At moments, a recollection of the scandal which she had heard came upon her with a twinge; and her brow was momentarily clouded, while her heart sunk; but the cloud passed away, and the heart grew lifted, as, watchful of every movement, yet without seeming to be so, Hammond took care so to direct her thought *from* himself, as to make the most favorable impression of self through media the most indirect. We will not attempt to pursue the conversation, which depended upon turns of expression, tones, and glances, which mere description must always find indescribable.

The excitements of the race interposed to give variety to the conversation between the pair. Hammond allowed nothing to escape which seemed to belong to his duties as *cicerone*. Aware of the preliminaries, he knew at what moment to direct his companion's attention to the course.

"They are hastening with their preparations for the race, Miss Foster, and if you will rise, as before, you will enjoy a good view of your favorite. She is certainly a very pretty creature."

"Where? Where?" and the damsel rose in her place, and again stood upon the seat above her attendant. But this time her hand did not rest upon his shoulder as before.

"You see her there, just beneath the stand of the judges. She is certainly a beautiful little thing, and comes up to the stand handsomely."

"Then you think that she will win?"

"It is very doubtful. She has, at least, two very formidable competitors."

"The Mississippi?"

"And 'Sorella.'"

"Is 'Sorella' a very fast animal?"

"She *was*, six months ago."

"But now?"

"All depends upon her rider."

"What of the ugly-coated beast—the dowdy, crazy something?"

"She may get the first heat, but will hardly do anything in the second. She wants substance. The danger to your namesake is of the same kind. She has spirit and fleetness, but not sufficient endurance. For a single mile, she might carry herself against either of these horses; but these are three-mile races, which her powers can scarcely undergo. That Mississippi mare is a model of training. I see where she stands, sleek, smooth, and so perfectly at home; so quiet; as if she knew her business thoroughly, and regarded it as done. 'Sorella' has work before her."

“Does Mr. Henderson ride ‘Sorella?’ ”

“No. I have persuaded him not to do so.”

Geraldine was about to ask the reason, when a nudge from her step-mother behind silenced her ; and, just then, the tap of the drum, and the voice of authority, drew the eyes of all parties to the starting-post.

CHAPTER VII.

SORELLA AND THE GYPSY JOCKEY.

THE horses entered were but four in number. These were, our Mississippian, "Graystreak," "Crazy Kate," the "Fair Geraldine," and "Sorella." The former was now decidedly the favorite of the field, and odds were given in her behalf. Numerous bets were offered and taken, and the excitement on the turf was great, and momentarily increasing. The "Fair Geraldine" had her backers, and so had "Crazy Kate" and "Sorella." But the latter was little known among the regular jockeys, and, though a symmetrical and well-shaped animal, there were none of those salient characteristics in her appearance which are apt to take the spectator. It was seen that she was fleet; and that she was rather bony, seemed to promise something for her hardihood. Ned Ramsey noticed her with some anxiety; and the watchful Lazy Jake Owens observed that he had a whisper *en passant* for the gentlemanly stranger who had so freely taken the offers of Jones Barry. But neither Ramsey nor the stranger declined any banters against "Graystreak;" their confidence in that favorite creature being in no respect impaired by the presence of the new competitor. Of course, we do not pretend to follow and describe the varieties of feeling and interest shown by the spectators. How they perilled their money, in what amount, and upon what horses, noways concerns our narrative. We may mention, however, that Miles Henderson had a couple of hundred and a few odd *fives* invested in the credit of his mare; while our friend Tom Nettles was pretty safe in taking the field against the "Fair GERAL-

dine" and "Crazy Kate," to the tune of two or three hundred more.

The examination of the horses showed them off to great advantage. "Graystreak" looked sleek, quiet, and confident, as before. "Sorella" was a meek animal also, with just such a twinkle of the eye as shows that there is no lack of spirit, with all the meekness. But the "Fair Geraldine" stripped to the survey with all the consciousness of a proud and petted beauty. She was restive and bright; a little too anxious and impatient, and carried her head with a toss which was not unworthy of her lovelier namesake. Her appearance compelled the admiration of all; and many were tempted to bet upon her beauty, who did not consider her heels. Her rider now was Jones Barry himself. He was really not satisfied that Sam Perkins had not done justice to "Glancus;" but, whether satisfied or not, nothing could possibly have prevented him from doing as the Earl of Totenham had been said to do at Doncaster.

"Your favorite is ready for the race, Miss Foster! you see Mr. Barry takes the field in person;" and Hammond pointed to the gaudy figure of that worthy, as the impatient "Geraldine" wheeled and capered beneath him.

"The white is 'Graystreak,' and the blue—"

"Crazy Kate!"

"But where is Mr. Henderson's rider?"

"He mounts now—that strange-looking urchin with a yellow-spotted bandanna, wound, gypsy fashion, around his head, without a jacket, with his shirt-sleeves bared to the elbow, and his suspenders wrapped around his waist."

"What a strange-looking creature! Who is he?"

"One Logan Whitesides; a knowing lad among horses, who is particularly well acquainted with 'Sorella.' He was her only rider when she was under training, and his whisper will do more with her than any other person's whip."

"Was it that he might get this boy that you coun-

selled Mr. Henderson not to ride himself?" asked Geraldine, with some interest.

"Yes! I knew that 'Sorella' would need every advantage in a contest with the Mississippi filly, and that Miles was quite too heavy to run her successfully himself."

Unconsciously, the girl looked pleased. Hammond saw the expression, and mused upon it; particularly as a querulous exclamation, at that moment, dropped from the hostile step-mother. But the proceedings of the course drew all eyes thither. All were saddled, the word was given, and away they went, like so many ambitious heroes, into battle.

The start was a successful one. The four horses seemed to jump off together, running side by side for a while, as if delighting in the line and order of a platoon charge. But soon the "Fair Geraldine" led off, taking the track for a quarter of a mile; "Crazy Kate" laying herself close behind, and "Graystrenk" and "Sorella" seeming to find their amusement in driving the two before them. Before the mile was two-thirds traversed, however, "Crazy Kate" showed symptoms of lagging, and "Sorella" dropped her with a bound, making even play between the "Mississippian" and the "Fair Geraldine." The latter continued well on, not needing any urgency of her rider, until the clattering heels of "Sorella" and "Graystreak," just at her haunches, impelled her to an effort. She bridled up at this forwardness, and a slight smack of the whip shocked her into a still more indignant determination to leave all vulgar companionship behind. She went off with a rocket-like impulse, but without obtaining her object. It was now evident that the "Mississippian" was resolved to cut her off from her triumph, and her rider was seen to apply the thong smartly to her sides. She passed, accordingly, between "Sorella" and the object of her ambition, and the next moment found her, lock and lock, in affectionate embrace with the high-spirited and aristocratic beauty. Vainly did the latter try to shake her off. All her efforts only served to keep the two in this position,

when, to the surprise of both, a shrill whistle from the rider of "Sorella" brought that mysterious creature with a rush between them, and flinging the dust in both their faces, she passed under the string, leaving her tail hidden between the lifted heads of the two emulous competitors. "Crazy Kate" darted into the allotted limits quite in season to save her distance, having reserved her powers for another brush.

The race was a beautiful one. The several merits of the first three horses were now fully displayed, though the extent of their powers of endurance could only be conjectured. They had evidently been ridden with a due regard to their qualities; and the competition was such as to maintain the excitement of the multitude, and to keep them in suspense till the very last moment. A shawl might have lapped them at several points in the race; and an ell of ribbon might have circled them as they darted beneath the string. It was clear that judgments were to be revised. "Sorella" had been undervalued. "Crazy Kate" looked better than ever, and her rider was known to be a first-rate jockey; and "Graystreak" was under the teaching of the very Machiavel of the Georgia turf. The "Fair Geraldine" had behaved too handsomely to have lost any of her supporters; and, whether "Graystreak" had yielded the heat through policy, or actually lost it in spite of all his efforts, was a very doubtful question, even among the knowing ones. There was a whisper that she seemed to complain in one of her pins; but Tom Nettles, who examined her closely, made no such discovery. Ned Ramsey showed anxiety, however, and this was seen by "Lazy Jake Owens," as well as Nettles. His personal care of his horse was exemplary, and his efforts to enable her to recover and cool off, without effort, were so many studies for the youthful jockeys who were crowding about and emulous of his renown. Jones Barry was by no means dissatisfied with the doings of his mare. She did not seem uneasy or distressed; cooled off naturally and soon, and was ready for the second trial in the shortest possible space. But,

to have seen the affectionate care of "Sorella," which was taken by her gypsy rider—how, in addition to the usual strippings and rubbings, he wound his arms about her neck, kissed her as if she had been a sweetheart, and whispered all sorts of pleasant nonsense in her ears; and how the filly turned to him with a knowing gesture; and how, when he stooped to rub her legs, her nose rested upon his shoulders with a sort of human interest, which drew crowds about the two in unaffected admiration! It realized, in some degree, the stories that we hear of the Arabian and his favorite steed. Logan Whitesides had first had his ambition lifted by his employment in the training of "Sorella." She was a first-love to him, and it would have come nigh to break his heart had he not achieved the victory.

"And so 'Sorella' has really won the victory?" said Geraldine to Hammond, as he returned to the carriage after a brief interview with Miles Henderson.

"The heat only—a third of the victory, Miss Foster. They are now preparing for the second trial."

"You are a witch in horses, Mr. Hammond. But pray what did you say in that short whisper which I saw you give to Mr. Henderson and his gypsy boy?"

Hammond laughed as he replied:—

"I simply instructed him that his policy was to *lose* the next heat."

"I don't understand you—lose!"

"That is, not attempt to win, but suffer it to be taken by the 'Mississippian.'"

"And why, pray?"

"That her strength in the third heat should not be perilled by an undue effort in the *second*; when, as most of the other horses will put forth their best ability, she might probably peril herself for nothing."

"I see, I see! But why lose to the 'Mississippian?' You say nothing of my namesake!"

"Your namesake has done her best already."

"You don't flatter, Mr. Hammond," said the step-

mother; "I do believe you have a spite against that animal."

"O no, Mrs. Foster! I'm sure you believe no such thing. She is a sweet and beautiful creature, who will do all that is in her power. It is her misfortune that her powers are overtaken. Mr. Barry expects too much from her. He does not overrate her fleetness, but he overrates her endurance; and he will distress, and probably injure her, before the race is over. So far from a spite against her, I sympathize with her, and if I could, would gladly save her from the hard work which is before her."

"Well, I'll never believe but you have a spite against her. You believe in any horse on the ground but her. I'd like to see you run your own; but I suppose it would require something more than a woman's entreaties to persuade you to that."

There was something in the tone with which these words were spoken, not less than the words themselves, which grated offensively on the ears of the person addressed; but he remained silent, and in a few moments the preparations for the second heat enabled him to divert the conversation to another channel. At the signal given by the drum, Geraldine again stood upon the seat of the carriage, an eager spectator of the issue. The word was given, and the start was again beautiful; the four steeds seeming to lap each other, whirling away for a while, in a sort of linked movement, which showed them all as if locked together in mutual relationship. "Crazy Kate" and "Geraldine" were soon again in the lead, as if by mutual consent between "Sorella" and "Graystreak;" swinging forward by the groups of spectators, the wagons and the tables, east and west, as if waltzing with wings at both feet and shoulders. Merrily did they glide away, leaving a space of thirty feet or more between their competitors, who appeared perfectly content to jog on together at a pace which inconvenienced neither, yet enabled them to keep always within speaking distance of the lively things in front. Thus trailing for

the first mile and better, they suffered the game to be played by other bands, only piping moderately to the music. But soon the "Mississippian" began to grow restive under restraint, and to put forth a much more ambitious leg than he had hitherto shown. He lifted away from "Sorella," and was soon upon the heels of the two ahead. A few bounds enabled him to separate the links between them, and to throw himself towards the back stretch of the second mile, between "Crazy Kate" and her fair competitor. "Sorella" made a similar push forward, and soon overcame the space which kept her from the embrace of "Crazy Kate;" but whether it was that the latter was less tempting than the beauty with the beautiful name, she did not prolong the *tête-à-tête* with her, but hurried forward to a more select meeting with the "Fair Geraldine;" perhaps it was a feeling of sympathy, which, at this moment, prompted the latter to forego her exertions, and loiter for the coming up of one who sought her so closely. Meanwhile, the ambitious maid of Mississippi darted ahead of all opponents, and, with so few tokens of civility, as to provoke the emulous efforts of the two nearest riders. Jones Barry was seen to apply the whip with unkind severity of hand, to the tender flanks of his favorite; while the gypsy boy who rode "Sorella" appeared to urge her forward with the utmost seeming anxiety, but without the use of any weapon. It was now perceived that the "Fair Geraldine," as if under a feeling of degradation, no longer lifted a hopeful and exulting head, nor tossed pridefully her luxuriant mane. That she began to droop was evident to the spectators, while the repeated strokes of the lash, from her rider, betrayed his own consciousness of a fact which he was quite unwilling to believe. These exertions still gave her headway for awhile, but it was at the expense of her heels. She gradually relaxed after these efforts, and soon had the mortification to find "Sorella" quietly working ahead, as they both stretched through the first quarter of the third mile. Hammond saw with satisfaction, that, while the boy who rode "Sorella" appeared to

labor anxiously, he used no whip, or only appeared to do so, while the beast lifted her legs freely, and set them down as if on velvet. The crowd, who knew nothing of his game, now looked upon it that she shared the exhaustion of "Geraldine," and were quite deceived by the arts of her rider. Even Ramsey himself counted upon him as a horse "done brown;" and whispered to Lazy Jake Owens that the race was won. But Lazy Jake was no slouch at an opinion either, in the matter of horse-flesh; and he answered, in the common proverb of warring in the South: "Don't whoop before you're out of the wood." But this heat was decided. The "Mississippian" had shown the cleanest heels, taking the track from all. It was observed that "Sorella," after once or twice yielding the lead to the "Fair Geraldine," now changed the figure entirely, and hastened forward so as to throw herself within a few decent bounds of "Graystreak," as the latter passed in under the string, the final victor of the heat. The native spirit of "Geraldine" did not suffer her to fall behind very far, though it was evident to all good judges that the game with her was up for the day; while "Crazy Kate" enjoyed to herself the Irishman's fun of driving all the rogues before her. Of the three winning horses, "Sorella" was the only one who had been economized, and the excellence of her jockey enabled her to keep this important fact a secret. A couple of lengths between her and "Graystreak, and twice the number between her and "Geraldine," left the minds of the multitude still in that condition of doubt in regard to the future which makes equally the interest of race and story. The betting parties were still hopeful; for, even where their favorites had not won, they came so near it, with the exception of "Crazy Kate," as to leave nothing certain in the chapter of coming events.

Well rubbed and groomed, three horses showed themselves for the third time upon the track. "Crazy Kate" has withdrawn in dudgeon, in consequence of the manifest neglect with which her companions have treated her performances. Her backers have sullenly yielded up

their *tin* to the numerous friends of the "Mississippian;" while Ramsey, and the unknown gentleman, have been reminding numerous persons of certain fives, tens, twenties, and hundreds—including our friend Jones Barry—which they unwisely perilled on the heels of a feminine creature avowedly *non compos*. This pleasant little episode greatly relieved the otherwise tedious interval between the second and the last heat. The "Fair Geraldine" seemed to have recovered her former spirits, as she came once more upon the turf; and, with the word "Go," she led off, "solitary and alone," as she had been ambitious to do on all previous occasions. But, after the first half mile, both the "Mississippian" and "Sorella" seemed disposed to make play, and to show that both had heels of wing and steam when the exigency was at hand. It was clear, however, that the two latter waited for each other. They knew the real adversary, and knew exactly when to terminate that deference for the beauty who now led them which, it was evident, they had yielded rather through policy than admiration. As the first mile was overcome, they gradually swallowed space, taking the wind completely out of the sails of "Geraldine," passing on each side of her, and closing up, as if anxious for the track. Barry at once put on steam with a heavy hand, but no application to the flanks, in the case of one so tender, could possibly furnish the legs with the proper facility for flight. The beauty wanted age for endurance. "Send me no more boys," said Napoleon to the government at home: "they only fill the hospitals." The tender years of "Geraldine," her delicate training, were adverse to her soldier-ship. Famous at a charge, she could not stand the campaign. The two veterans, better fortified by muscle and training, of better bottom and not less speed, soon forged ahead, and left her painfully to struggle up the hill alone. "Graystreak" was evidently girdling up her loins for the last great effort. She felt the necessity of putting all her soul into her heels, as she felt that she had a sterling customer beside her, one who took a deep

shot, and loved long *reckonings*. There were bone, and muscle, and speed, to be overcome, and she had a pride and reputation at stake, to say nothing of the hundreds which our friend Jones Barry no doubt found *cool enough* by this time. There was evident mischief in the "Mississippian." Her rider glared round, in his white uniform, at the queer little gypsy rogue who kept tenaciously with him, neck and neck, as if measuring their mutual strength for the last great struggle. It was neck or nothing with them both. Both were resolute to do, or die. The gypsy rogue seemed to crouch, at moments, in his saddle, as if to take the leap of a cougar on the fox, and his heels would sink slightly into the sides of his creature, as if embracing her with a love which found all its pleasures in hers. Side and side they rode, until, in the eyes of the distant spectators, they seemed to resolve themselves into a single man and horse. The struggle was desperately close. It was your purse or mine, as they darted eagerly towards the last quarter stretch, leaving the wind behind them, and seeming to whiz along through air, as a bullet from the cannon. "The bravest held his breath for a time." The multitude pressed forward along the track. Mouths were open wide with expectation; eyes dilating beyond their orbs, with delight and anxiety.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Geraldine Foster, as she grasped the arm of Hammond.

"Beautiful!" said Hammond, naturally enough, as he gazed into her eyes. We dare not look with him while the struggle is thus at its height. The jockey on "Graystreak" now made tremendous efforts; his eye fixed on the stubborn little gypsy, as if to note the opening for an advantage. Neck and neck they still clung together, and but a few more bounds were necessary to the final achievement. "Whitejacket" gathered himself up for the last issue, and, rising in his stirrups, with the whip keenly and rapidly administered, he raised the head of "Graystreak" for the final bound beneath the line. But "Nojacket," our little gypsy, knew his moment also.

He gave no whip; he rose not in the saddle; but crouching, rather, and clinging upon her neck, he whispered a word, a single word, in the ear of "Sorella," and the noble Arabian went out of the lock in a way to make an arrow wonder. By a single head, she passed ahead of her resolute competitor; and, as her triumph was beheld, the big, swollen heart of the multitude relieved itself by a shout that shook the field. Then our gypsy-jockey dropped from his creature, and seized her about the neck, kissing her once more as passionately as the lover, for the first time successful. He felt the triumph as much more precious than he did the "cool hundred," one of the several that had been transferred on this occasion from the pockets of the wealthy Jones Barry to those of other people, with which Miles Henderson rewarded him for his riding. Then might the multitude be seen following the horses—horse and rider—with exultation and admiration. Our gypsy was, next to his horse, the wonder of the field. The boys scampered after him as *their* hero, while the negroes, everywhere exclaiming as he came, pointed him out to their grinning companions, as "Dat little Login Whitesides; da's a debble hese'f, for ride!" Glory is a thing of various complexions; and our little friend Logan was quite as well satisfied, no doubt, with the negro form of compliment, as with that which issued in rounded periods from more polished lips. Let us now look to other parties.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GANDER TOURNAMENT.

THE excellent lady, Mrs. Foster, was quite dissatisfied at the result of the race. Perhaps she might have been still more so, had the victory been obtained by "Ferraunt," instead of "Sorella;" by the horse of Hammond in place of that of his friend. She did not conceal her mortification, which vented itself in expressions of strong sympathy with Jones Barry, even in the presence of his conqueror. He, however, either was, or affected to be, wholly indifferent to the result. He had various excuses for the defeat, which he could ascribe to any and everything, always excepting his mare's ability and his own riding.

"I'll go you a thousand any day, Miles Henderson, on 'Geraldine,' against 'Sorella.' I know what my mare can do. But she wasn't groomed properly. That little rascal Sam Perkins would give her water, though I told him not; and he girt her in so tightly, that the poor thing could hardly draw a decent breath."

"And you're a little too heavy for your mare, Barry," added Nettles; who, having pocketed a clever share of the money of the other, could afford to do the amiable.

"There's something in that," was the admission of Barry. "But, Tom, didn't I ride her beautiful?"

"You *can* ride," was the liberal acknowledgment of the other, with just the sort of emphasis and look, in the right place, to render the admission satisfactory.

Meanwhile, Henderson and Hammond had both been conversing with the ladies; though the latter could not but perceive that Geraldine manifested, in his case, a more than usual degree of reserve and distance. He

was not long at a loss to what influence to ascribe this deportment, since Mrs. Foster, though outwardly civil, was yet not altogether capable of suppressing all shows of that spirit by which she was secretly animated towards him. True, however, to his maxim, he betrayed no particular concern, but was only the more studious to overlook none of the formal and becoming courtesies which society had established as proper from the one sex to the other. He was not only scrupulously polite and attentive, but particularly graceful and spirited. His conversation rose in force and animation with the consciousness of his equivocal position; and the vivacity and freedom of his dialogue and manner were only restrained by an overruling resolution to permit to himself no such liberties as might incur censure or provoke offence. He played the diplomat with a rare excellence; and Mrs. Foster leaned back in the carriage, heartily vexed with a person whom she longed to wound, yet who gave her no advantage; and who, in spite of all her malice, still contrived, seemingly without exertion, to win the ears, and compel the sympathies of her *protégé*. The carriage, meanwhile, was got in readiness; the horses were *geared* in, and the lady proceeded to invite the gentlemen to return with her to dinner. Hammond and Henderson declared their pleasure in escorting the ladies home; while Jones Barry and Nettles excused themselves by alleging that, with them, the business of the day was very far from being over. There were several races yet to be run. "Glaucus" was again to try his heels against some other nags, which were yet to be brought forward; and there was to be a "*scrub*" race for *sweepstakes*, in which more than twenty horses had been already entered. The interest of Nettles in these events, though he ran no horse himself, was not less great than that of Jones Barry, while his profits were likely to be much greater.

"Besides," says Barry; "there's the circus, Mrs. Foster, the circus;" and he rubbed his hands. "And I never saw the circus in my life. I'm told they do all

sorts of things. There's a man there that jumps through the eye of a needle!"

"Oh, Mr. Barry, how can you believe such nonsense?"

"It's true, by the pipers! here's the advertisement; here's the picture itself; the man and the needle."

"As large as life!" said Nettles.

And Barry pulled out of his pocket one of those enormous bills of the circus, which one sees at times, in the South and West, covering the sides of a court-house. As he held it up, it fairly covered him from head to foot.

"I don't see why he shouldn't jump through the eye of such a needle, Mr. Barry; the needle seems a great deal larger than the man."

"So *it* does," said Barry.

"Oh! but that's only to show it to the people, Miss Geraldine; that's only the picture; for I saw the needle, the real needle itself; and I assure you that it's not much larger than those you ladies work with. It isn't exactly a cambric needle, I grant you; but then again, it's nothing near like a bagging-needle."

"You saw it, Tom?" asked Barry.

"To be sure I did!" was the reply.

"And you believe, Mr. Barry, that any man could go through such a needle?" queried Mrs. Foster.

"I don't see how he can," said the other, gravely; "it would break out the eye."

A roar of laughter from Henderson followed this oracular opinion, of which Miss Geraldine herself indulged in a moderate imitation. Mrs. Foster lay back in the carriage, frowning and mortified. Nettles continued:—

"But that's not all; the clown who goes through the needle uncorks a bottle with his eye, sets fire to a wheel-rocket with his whiskers, and afterwards swallows his own head."

"Ah! Tom," says Barry, "that won't do! Nobody can make me believe that. It may be that he could draw a cork with his eye; and, as for setting off wheelrockets with his whiskers, that, I suppose, isn't

altogether impossible; but I'll be d——d if I believe a word about swallowing his own head. Swallowing his own head! Why, who the deuce could ever think of doing such a thing? Oh no, Tom Nettles; that cock won't fight! It's likely he may make a show of doing something of the kind, by sleight of hand."

"Of mouth, rather."

"Well, mouth then; but I know it's all make b'lieve—don't you think so, Mrs. Foster?"

"I don't think about it, Mr. Barry. It's all trick and humbug. Circuses are all vulgar places. I have no interest in them."

"Vulgar! why, Lord bless you, Mrs. Foster, the whole country's to be there. Don't you see the carriages coming in already? There'll be a matter of three hundred ladies, I reckon."

"Ladies, indeed!" said the lady. "Perhaps so, sir. We sha'n't be among them, however. Scipio," to the driver, "are you ready?"

"All ready, ma'am."

"Well, Mr. Barry, we leave you. Mr. Nettles, we shall always be glad to see you at the lodge. Gentlemen," to Hammond and Henderson, "do you still keep your purpose of riding with us, or have the charms of the clown, as we have heard them described, persuaded you to think better of it, and stay for the circus?"

"If one could be sure that the clown would act honestly, and really make a gulp of his own head," mused Hammond, with gravity.

Barry looked up bewildered, his mouth wide open, as Nettles proceeded to assert that the thing was really done in a most lifelike and natural manner; though, as the clown reappeared always the next day with his head on, looking quite as well as usual, he concluded, with his friend Barry, that it was only "make b'lieve," mere sleight of hand or mouth, the clever trick of a clever juggler—"though," added the speaker, with admirable gravity, "it certainly takes in everybody—everybody believes it."

"Drive on, Scipio," said the lady, imperiously, as if anxious to escape from the confiding, yet dubious gaze of Barry.

The carriage whirled away, Hammond and Henderson taking opposite sides, the former beside the window near which Geraldine sat, while his friend was the particular escort of the mother. We will leave them on their homeward progress, and return to our companions, Jones Barry and Tom Nettles.

These two worthies at once proceeded with proper diligence to business. Under the counsel of the latter, Barry employed, as the rider of "Glaucus," the little gypsy, who had lifted "Sorella" so handsomely over the track; and the result was an improvement in the events of the contest. But it is not our purpose to pursue the history of the turf at Hillabee. Ours is not a racing calendar, and we must leave such histories to those who are more perfect in the history of the stud. It is enough that we say that the day continued one of great excitement to the close. Some small winnings, at the winding up, served somewhat to console Barry for his heavier losses; and he was rendered particularly happy, as Tom Nettles introduced him to a couple of the chief men of the circus, by whom he was invited into the hippodrome itself, and permitted, while yet the day lasted, to behold the vacant scene upon which such wonders were so soon to be enacted. He was particularly anxious to get a sight of the clown, but did not express his desire; as he felt that one who was destined so shortly to swallow his own head might very naturally desire to have all the interval to himself, that he might prepare himself for the impending catastrophe. Here, a table being spread *extempore*, some cold baked meats were brought forth from a curtained interior; and, with the help of a ham and a loaf, which Nettles gathered from the booths of one of his acquaintance, and a stout quart-decanter of French brandy, which the equestrians had brought with them, Jones Barry was very soon reconciled to the absence of the

ladies. The decanter was soon emptied and replenished, and this in time disappearing, the place was occupied by a couple of bottles of tolerable wine. Nettles was fond of strong drink, but he had one of those indurated heads which could bear any degree of *soaking* without betraying their owners. Jones Barry was much less of a veteran, though he loved good liquors, after a gentlemanly fashion. Enough, however, that, before he left the table, he had become captious and somewhat unruly; and it was only by adroit management that Nettles could conduct him out of the tabernacle, so as to afford to the manager an opportunity for preparing for the performance of the night. In the open air, Barry was more manageable, though it required an additional supply of stimulus to keep his stomach from entire subjugation to the hostile power which he had thrown into the territory. Nettles was not unwilling to indulge him. He was a fellow of fun, and found his capital in this excellent subject. He had set out to enjoy a *spreec*, and he was resolved to make a night of it. An hour's wandering about the encampment, for such had the race-course at Hillabee become for the occasion, and there were a thousand ways for getting up and letting off steam, to employ the slang phraseology of the region. Wagons were to be upset, drunken men stripped, the tails and manes of horses cropped; these, with other practices, in which the humorists were quite as "rough as ready," served to beguile the interval between the close of the race and the opening of the circus. But it was the fortune of Jones Barry to make himself conspicuous in a more important enterprise. The wanderings of our companions in search of adventures led them, with a crowd of others, to an amphitheatre, about three hundred yards from the race-course, where they witnessed a sport in progress, to which it seemed that all they had hitherto beheld was mere child's-play, tame and spiritless. This was a "*Gander-pulling*!"

Reader, do you know what a gander-pulling is? If you do not, it is quite as well that you should form some

idea of the sources of pleasure to the purely vulgar and uncultivated nature. Man is undoubtedly a beast, unless you contrive some process for making him a gentleman; and there is no question but that, as he has a natural appetite for recreation and pleasure, if you do not contrive for him such as will not be unacceptable to the Deity, the devil will more liberally provide with such as will make the man acceptable only to himself. *Gander-pulling*, accordingly, is one of those sports which a cunning devil has contrived to gratify a human beast. It appeals to his skill, his agility, and strength; and is therefore in some degree grateful to his pride: but, as it exercises these qualities at the expense of his humanity, it is only a medium by which his better qualities are employed as agents for his worser nature. *Gander-pulling* has been described as a sort of tournament on horseback; the only difference is that the knight has a *goose* for his opponent, instead of a person like himself. The man is mounted on horseback, while the goose is mounted upon poles. These poles, or saplings, are thrust firmly into the ground, some twelve feet apart; but they are united by a cord at the top, which hangs loosely, while, pendent from the extremity, the living gander is fastened by the legs. Here he swings his head, hanging downwards just above the path, between the two saplings, and just high enough to be within reach of the man on horseback. The achievement of the rider is to run his horse, at full speed, at the bird, and, grasping him by the neck, to wring his head off as he passes on. This is not so easy a performance. The neck of the gander has been previously stripped of all its feathers, and has then been thickly coated with grease or oil. Nothing can be made more slippery; and, shining and warming in the sun, the glittering neck of the unhappy bird looks like that of a young boa, for the first time practising from the bough, under which he expects the rabbit or the rat to glide. To increase the difficulty of the exploit, and to prevent any unfair delay in the approach of the assail-

ant, four men are stationed, armed with flails of hickory, on each side of the track, and at proper intervals. These, as the horse approaches, lay their hickories upon his flanks; and so unmercifully, as not only to make him go headlong forward, but frequently to make him bolt the track in order to escape such unfriendly treatment. The course is laid out on the exterior of a circle some two hundred feet in diameter; which circuit the rider must necessarily make before reaching the goose, starting from a post which is properly watched by judges. He is not expected to go at full speed except when within twenty yards of the game. Thus guarded, the victim is not so easily decapitated. It is only the experienced horseman, and the experienced sportsman, who can possibly succeed in the endeavor. Young beginners, who look on the achievement as rather easy, are constantly baffled; many find it impossible to keep the track; many lose the saddle, and, even where they succeed in passing beneath the saplings without disaster, they either fail altogether in grasping the goose, which keeps a constant fluttering and screaming; or, they find it impossible to retain their grasp, at full speed, upon the greasy and eel-like neck and head which they have seized. Meantime, their failure is by no means sauce for the gander. The tug, from which he at length escapes, makes him feel excessively uncomfortable while it lasts. The oil without does not protect him from severe sore-throat within. His voice becomes hoarse with screaming; and, long before his head is fairly off, he has lost those nicer sensibilities which teach him exactly how the event took place. The beating and bolting of the horses, the emptying of the saddles, the failures of the "pullers," the screams, and wild wing-flapping of the bird—these constitute the glory of the entertainment; every point in the tilting being watched with eager anxiety, and announced with screams and yells from the multitude, which form no bad echoes to the cries of the goose.

So much for the sport in general. It had been some

time in progress, when Nettles and Jones Barry drew nigh. The moment the latter beheld the scene, he at once declared himself the man to take the gander's head. Nettles was very far from discouraging him from an adventure which promised fun; the more particularly as his companion, if not absolutely drunk, was, as they phrase it in Mississippi, "in a state of betweenity," i. e. neither drunk nor sober. A dozen had already tried their hands without success; but, evidently, to the perfect disquiet of the gander. There he swung aloft; his wings flapping furiously at intervals, and, every now and then, his throat pouring forth a sharp sudden scream, the moment he became conscious of a horse in motion. Barry fixed his eyes upon the shining neck, and shook his hands at the bird, the fingers spreading out, like claws, as he cried to the victim: "Here's the claws that'll have you off, my beauty! You're shining there for me! Who goes a / against Jones Barry? Who, I say? Let him show himself, and be ——!"

It is to the credit of Nettles that, though willing to see the fun, he would not suffer his companion to be fleeced. He interposed, that his bets should be trifles only, though, in this friendly interposition, he incurred the denunciations of the person whom he saved. Already had he paid for his "matriculation," and little Logan Whitesides was dispatched for "Glaucus;" for, though fuddled, Barry was not prepared to employ the "Fair Geraldine," his favorite, for such ignoble purposes.

"Hurrah for Jones Barry," said Ben Burg; "He ain't too proud to jine in the pleasures of the poor man!"

"He's jest drunk enough for any sort of pleasure, poor or rich," was the comment of Lazy Jake Owens.

"I'll lay you a quarter, Jake," said Burg, "that he'll take the gander."

"That'll be because he's near kin to him, then."

"If he does," said a third, "it'll be owing to his liquor. He couldn't do it sober."

"Shall we go a quarter on him?" said Burg; a conscientious feeling prompting him to vindicate, to this extent, the ability of a person from whom he had contrived to borrow a couple of half eagles but a few hours before.

"Make it a half, Burg."

"D-o-n-e !" said the latter, rather slowly.

The vulgar look with respect, even while they sneer, at the doings of those above them in fortune or position. It was the fortune of Jones Barry to provoke a sensation always among this class of people. They watched and waited his movements. The gander obtained a brief respite, while the boy went for "Glaucus"—settled down into a drooping quiet, and hushed for a period his screams. Our sprightly little gypsy was not long before appearing with the horse. He was ready saddled and bridled for the heat, and it was with more ambition than agility that our hero contrived to vault into the seat. Then it was that the uproar grew.

"Hurrah for Barry !" cried Nettles, at the top of his voice.

"Who goes a picayune against Barry ?"

"Done, with you, 'Squire Nettles."

"And here's another ! He's no more the chap to take off a gander's head than I am to put it on."

"Hurrah for the captain !" cried Burg.

"You may hurrah till your throat aches, but that goose will never catch that gander," was the unseemly echo of Lazy Jake Owens.

A hundred voices joined in the shouting. The boys rolled, and roared, and tumbled, throwing the dust up fifty feet in air, as the knight of the goose prepared to make his passage at arms. The men with the flails did not need to use their hickories. Barry came on at full speed, and, amidst shouts of congratulation, he kept his horse steadfast along the track, and through the saplings, from whose united tops the gander was suspended. The bird flounced and shrieked, flapping his wings with immense violence. Barry, dropping his bridle in his

excitement, threw up both hands, and grasped, not the goose, but the rope by which it was suspended. The horse passed instantly from under him, and, for a moment, he hung in air, the wings of the gander playing the devil's tattoo rather rapidly upon his face, breast, and shoulders. It was but for an instant, however. The cord, calculated to sustain one goose only, broke under double weight, and down came the pair together, the gander uppermost. Never had such a scene been witnessed before, in the whole annals of gander-pulling, even from the first dawn of its discovery among our European ancestors. The field rang with shouts of merriment; a most royal delirium seized upon the republican. Some rolled on the earth in convulsions; some clapped their hands and shouted; while the boys shot off their guns, to the great confusion and disorder of horseflesh.

Barry rose half-stunned and thoroughly bewildered. The gander had revenged himself on our luckless adventurer for all the assaults he had himself sustained. His wings had been busy, from the first moment of their encounter and fall, to that when the parties were separated, and chiefly upon the face of our hero. His cheeks were scraped rather than scratched; his nose and mouth were bleeding. His shirt bosom was equally torn and soiled, and his hair was lifted in as much disorder as was Job's when he beheld the vision of the night. Nettles came to his relief, and had his face washed, while little Logan Whitesides ran after and recovered the horse "Glaucus." Ludicrous as had been the scene, and much beyond any that the multitude had expected, they were still, now that the first burst of merriment was over, in no mood to lose their usual fun. The gander was re-hoisted, newly greased, and set aloft, screaming with new disquiet as he rose in air. There were twenty gallant youngsters all ready to undertake the feat at which Jones Barry had so ingloriously failed; but a proper courtesy required that he should be permitted to recover his laurels. But when the thing was proposed to him, he shook his head. He

had not quite recovered from the unavoidable confusion of ideas which resulted from the twofold influence of the cognac and the concussion.

"No, I think not," said he. "Goose, eh! Nettles; we've had dinner." Such was the seemingly inconsequential reply; in which, however, Nettles detected the latent meaning.

"Yes," said he, "and ate very heartily, both of us; why should we want the goose?"

"Shall we go, Tom?" asked Barry, sobering by degrees, and feeling rather sham-faced.

"No!" said the other; "here's Meredith's wagon. He keeps good liquor; we'll take a consoler." And they went aside together to the wagon, where they both obtained an apple-toddy, the saccharine property being derived from the best mountain honey, while the apple-brandy was as good as ever filled up the corn-rows at election time. Barry felt better after the beverage, and the two returned to the gander-tournament together. The game was already resumed and in full blast. Three or four assailants had been baffled. But they usually came up a second and a third time to the scratch. The only discouraging circumstance which finally arrested their efforts being the repeated charges for new entries. The gander was one of fortunate fates; his owner was delighted to perceive that the instincts of the bird enabled him to anticipate the moment of danger, and to exercise his most rapid movements, just as the grasp was made upon his neck. He eluded several fingers; but some clutched him, and the "scrag" paid severely from the jerk which followed, even though it finally slipped from the gripe of the enemy. But his voice was suffering, and his action was greatly diminished. It was then that Nettles found himself plucked by the sleeve, and drawn aside by our gypsy boy, Logan Whitesides.

"Well! what now, Logan?"

"Why, Squire, ef you'll only ax the capper to let me

ride 'Gloccus' at the gander, I'm a thinking I can ease off that head thar, ef 'twas never done afore."

Nettles found it no difficult matter to persuade Barry, and almost the next assailant of the goose was our urchin. He certainly looked less like one to "ease off the head" than those who had preceded him. He was the smallest of all the adventurers; rode squat, with a stoop, doubling up like a frog or monkey on the leap. But if he lacked in size, he was possessed of rare agility. He was all wire and spring; and, a fact not generally known, he had been trained to the sport in another county, and when much younger. His ability in riding we have already seen. Nettles was a judge of boys as well as horses.

"Who covers an X against little Logan Whitesides."

"I'll do that same," cried Lazy Jake Owens, and there were other customers for similar amounts. Nettles soon found that he had nearly a hundred upon the fate of the gander. It was not long in suspense.

"Go ahead, Logan!" was the cry of Nettles.

The boy obeyed him. The boys rushed after their hero with a shout. He himself shouted, and the descending flails of the men of hickory scarcely grazed the haunches of the fleetly-hurrying "Glaucus." In a moment, he had reached the foot of the scaffolding from the top of which hung the victim. The bird uttered tremendous screams, and flapped his wings wide and heavily. Then could the gypsy boy be seen to crouch, then to shoot upwards like an arrow, and the next moment he was through the saplings, bearing aloft the head, windpipe, and all of the gander but his body;—the segregated throat continuing to pour scream upon scream, convulsively, as the urchin waved the head of the bird in triumph over his own. The field shook with the uproar of rejoicing, and little Logan Whitesides promised to become the hero of the county. He won not a little in more solid coin than praises. He too had his bets abroad, and was calling in his fips and picayunes, his bits and quarters, from a considerable space around

him, while Nettles, with equal satisfaction, was reminding sundry of his neighbors of a certain handsome letter of the alphabet whose name was X. Barry, too, was in a high state of exultation, for was it not his "Glaucus" by whom the victory was won?

CHAPTER IX.

HOW THE HERO OF THE CIRCUS MAY SWALLOW HIS OWN
OR HIS NEIGHBOR'S HEAD.

ALTOGETHER, the events of the day had not tended to soothe the humors nor satisfy the self-esteem of Mr. Jones Barry. The first excitement over, by which even the defeated may be temporarily sustained, he began to reflect upon his losses. His favorite mare had been discredited; and though "Glaucus" had retrieved in the sweepstakes the honor which he might have been supposed to have forfeited in the first races, yet this could in no respect compensate for the defeat of the "Fair Geraldine," coupled as was this defeat with the loss of several "cool hundreds." It was in due degree with the increasing soberness of Barry, that he began thus moodily to meditate events. The conflict with the gander, which had left him with a head and neck quite as sore as his moral feelings, had somewhat subdued his vanity; and he really began to think, as people had long since begun to say, behind his back, that he had been making a great fool of himself. Reflections such as these, were they allowed to continue, would probably almost always result in the improvement of the individual. But, in the case of weak persons, who have been accustomed to avoid and escape such reflections, and whom fortune and circumstances enable to do so, it is scarcely possible for such a mood of mind to continue long. There are always some good-natured friends in every fool's circle, to assist in keeping him a fool; and, by interposing at moments when self-esteem is beginning to be rightly humbled, they succeed in silencing the officious monitor, either by well-sugared falsehoods and

specious flatteries, or by doing what our excellent sportsman, Tom Nettles, conceived it proper for him to do on the present occasion. He saw, as the effects of the apple-toddy subsided, that Jones Barry was about to sink into sullenness, which he regarded as a sort of stupidity; and he knew but one specific in all such cases, and that was to repeat the dose which had been found already so effectual; they stopped, accordingly, at a wagon on which they saw conspicuous a pine sapling above a barrel, and were soon gratified with the beverage they sought. The spirits of Barry rose with the draught. The effect was so pleasant that another was called for, and, by the time that the two had reached the entrance of the hippodrome, our brave gander-puller avowed himself as expert a rider on double horses as any fellow in the circus.

"It's true I've never seen 'em, Tom," said he, "but I've heard of them often enough. Joe Smith used to tell me of what he'd seen in Savannah and Augusta. Now, Joe used to say of my riding, I was fit to be in the circus. For a cool hundred now, I'd ride against the crack fellow of this company, who, I suppose, is no great shakes, and by ——, if they give me a chance to-night, I'll challenge the whole kit and boiling of 'em."

"Oh, you be k——d, Barry," said the other, irreverently: "you are the greatest brag I ever heard. Let yourself alone, and don't be trying to be everything. You're quite enough as you are. You are a good-looking little fellow."

"Little!" exclaimed Barry: "By gracious, Nettles, I'm as good a man as you are, any day."

"So you are, but not as big!"

"Little! But I don't suppose you meant any insult, Nettles, for you said 'good-looking too.'"

"So I did! I say, you're a devilish good-looking little fellow; you're rich, and have everything you want. You *can* ride, though you're quite too heavy for 'Geraldine.'"

"Yet you say I'm little."

"Yes, little and not light. You see, you're a sort of chunk of a fellow, with more girth than legs, and a leetle too ambitious for your weight, Jones."

"You're mighty plain spoken, Tom."

"Why yes; friends have a privilege, you know."

"O yes—to be sure; but look you, Tom, I feel monstrous like licking the best friend in the world, when he calls me little."

"Well, you don't lick me, for two reasons; the first is, that I won't let you, and the next is, that you won't let yourself. But look you, Jones, this is dry talking, and I see you're in bad spirits; let's look after some good ones. There's a wagon there; I reckon we'll find something. Let's take another drink, and we'll be fresh for the circus."

"Agreed," said the other; and, as they rolled over to the opposite side of the road, amid a confused assemblage of carts, carriages, and wagons, the unsteady gait of Barry showed but too certainly that the apple-toddy had been already too potent for his perpendicular.

"Ride!" said he. "By gracious, Tom, I could straddle a barrel of peach, and make it streak away as fast as them circus fellows make their horses."

"Humph! If you go on at this rate, your swallow will be as good as the clown's, who means to take in his own head, you know."

"And you, Tom, you a fellow of sense, to believe that cock-and-a-bull story!"

"Believe what you please, but here's the liquor. Ho! there, Gerlts—that you?"

Nettles knew the whole country.

"What's left of me, 'Squire. But what'll you have? Here's mountain-peach, and here's apple."

"The apple, then, with a bed of honey for it to dream upon. I stick to the apple, Jones; I never mix my liquors if I can help it."

"What!" cried the other, with a grin; "afraid!

Tom Nettles ; afraid of two liquors ! Halloo ! there, old Gerdts, you don't know me ; never mind ; give me both ; peach and apple ; who's afraid ? Equal parts, old still, and no slow charcoal dropping. Ease my eye, quickly ; it's strained by the heavy sunshine."

Barry was becoming pleasantly perverse, and was in the very humor for all sorts of cross purposes. When conducted with some difficulty by his friend, they entered the amphitheatre where they had taken their dinner that day. The scene was now changed as if by magic. The place was thoroughly lighted, a perfect blaze of splendor, which showed, conspicuously clear, the remotest parts of the pavilion. The seats, which encircled three-fourths of the area, were occupied almost entirely. Our two friends were compelled to take places on the lowest bench, and within a foot of the small rim of earth which had been heaped up around the ring, rather as a mark than a barrier. There was no fence to keep the spectators from the track, and to check the erring vaultings of a vicious horse and an inferior rider. The seats were divided into two great and equal sections, one assigned to the whites and the other to the blacks. They were raised (a rude scaffolding of plank) to the very eves of the tent, and the heads of the visitors were in close neighborhood with the shaking canvas. Hundreds of showy damsels, with ribbons and feathers flying, might be seen, all impatience and sunny smiles, their several gallants being eager in describing what they knew, and what they anticipated. Many of these had come a great distance to the sports of Hillabee ; as, in ancient times, they flocked to the amusements of the tournament ; and for the same reason, the equal desire for recreation and novelty, and the want of great cities, which afford these habitually. The *dress circle* was eminently well filled. The girls and boys had crowded in from all parts of the country. Ancient ladies, who had heard vague tidings of the circus, or had probably had glimpses of such a vision in their youthful days, came hither to revive old memories,

or to gratify long-cherished desires. The old gentlemen necessarily accompanied their wives and kindred. The farmer was curious to see the reality of those spectacles of which great pictures had already been made to adorn his hamlet, and jockeys naturally came wherever the heroism of horseflesh could be made to tell. The negroes were not less curious. Hundreds were in attendance, from all quarters. They had trudged or trotted on foot, on mule, in wagon, for ten or fifteen miles the night before, to see sights and wonders. Each was in his best. Bright calicoes flamed on every side, to the very summit of their circumscribed domain; and all was hope and expectation, as Jones Barry and Tom Nettles made their appearance, and scrambled to a seat.

They were not kept in waiting long. The spectacle soon began. Horses, pied and spotted, and of all colors, made their appearance. Children rode, women rode, the clown rode, and it was all sorts of riding. Of course, we shall not pretend to describe a spectacle with which everybody is more or less familiar. Journeys to Brentford, Gilpin's race, and several other pieces were enacted. The equestrians had their share of applause; but, after all, the glory of the spectacle was in that comical fellow, the clown. Buried in a grotesque and monstrous Egyptian mask, his face thoroughly concealed, and so artfully that its location could not exactly be determined, his voice seemed to come from some vaulted and hollow apartment below the ground. His antics were indescribable. His jugglery alone must demand our attention, as it somewhat involved one of our acquaintance. It happened that the scene required our clown to take wine with an African magician. He was momentarily expecting him, and he was proceeding to show the audience how he should bamboozle the magician, and finally "swallow his soul."

"Swallow his soul!" exclaimed Barry, in horror, to Nettles.

"He'll do it!" said the other, gravely. "You'll see."

"Here, now," exclaimed the clown, "is a brandy-cocktail in which I've buried Mumbo-Jumbo's soul. It's the most beautiful drink in the world; perhaps you'd like to try it?" said he, and he very courteously presented it to our two friends. Barry saw, as he fancied, some of the fine cognac of which he had partaken freely in that very place, on that very day; and, being exceedingly thirsty, he innocently and incontinently exclaimed—

"I don't care if I do—thank you!" Speaking thus, he rose and put forth his hand; but, by an adroit movement, throwing the long bunch of streamers from his fool's cap full in the face of our hero, the clown gulped down the beverage himself, exclaiming—

"Perhaps you'll wait till you can get it!"

The audience roared with delight. Furious at his disappointment, and the ridiculous figure which he cut, Barry at once *mounted* the clown; and, at the first grasp, tore away what seemed to be the entire head and neck of the unfortunate jester. With this terrible evidence in his clutches, he looked around him aghast, scarcely daring to guess the extent of his achievement. The clown, meanwhile, had retreated at the first assault, and before Barry could recover his wits and equilibrium, for he could not well anticipate a renewal of the conflict from one whose entire *caput* he carried in his hand, the mountebank, squatting low, darted between the legs of our hero; who had, in some measure, straddled the little circuit of earth by which the ring was circumscribed. The face of Barry was to the audience, and the assault of the clown surprised him. He was lifted from his feet before he apprehended danger; and his assailant, rising under his burden, which he did not seem to feel, trotted with him quite across the arena. Barry was thus carried forward horizontally, his head addressing the white, and his heels the negro portion, of the assembly.

"Tom Nettles—Tom!" was all that the poor fellow

could articulate, but he screamed and kicked tremendously. His efforts were wasted on the air. The clown had only attained his great flexibility by exercises which had imparted the most wonderful power to his muscles, and Barry was but a child in his grasp. His struggle only increased the fun. The audience shrieked and howled with delight, in proportion to the futile efforts of the captive; and when they beheld the captor hurry with his prey to the negro side of the house, and saw him pitch the unfortunate gentleman headlong into the arms of a great fat negro wench, one of the most enormous in the assembly, who sat trickling with oleaginous sweat, on the third tier, one would have thought the whole pavilion would have come down with the delirious shouts of the multitude.

"Here's an abolitionist for you, mother Possum-fat!" cried the clown, as he plumped poor Barry into her embrace.

"I no want 'em!" cried the woman, shuffling herself free from the burden. Barry, rolling out of her lap, continued to roll down the successive tiers, until he came plump into the soft bed of sand and sawdust, which had been prepared for a very different animal. Furious with rage, he rose to his feet, and, seizing a pole with which one of the equestrians had been balancing, he darted headlong at the offending clown.

"Hurrah, red-jacket! Hurrah, clown!" were the several cries of the audience. "Hurrah, Captain!" was the more cordial shout of recognition and encouragement from those who personally knew our hero: "that's being into him with a long pole, indeed!"

But the clown had no idea of meeting such an enemy, armed in such a fashion; and, eluding the tremendous blow and thrust with which Barry addressed his ribs, he vaulted clear over the shoulder of the latter and disappeared behind the screen which sheltered the actor from the audience. His enemy thus out of sight, the furious champion proceeded to wreak his vengeance upon the inanimate objects around him. The scene in which

the clown was to have tricked the African magician out of his soul was a most exquisite garden of Bagdad. There were stands of beautiful flowers, vases of great magnitude, statues, and several rich things by way of ornament and decoration, which, seen through the medium of distance, or by the aid of flickering lights, looked to be very precious. There was also a sort of close bower, a framework draped with silk, in which the cunning clown had placed a sleeping beauty. She was not the smallest part of the temptations with which the soul of the magician was to be entrapped. Barry, with his pole, had already thrown down one or two of the wooden flower-vases, with their precious contents, and his pole now descended upon the bower, which a single stroke served to precipitate to the ground. To the surprise of the assailant, not less than the assembly, up sprang from the ruins a most beautifully dressed damsel; young, pretty, and habited like a Sultana. It was fortunate, indeed, that the weight of the pole had not fallen upon her. But it has grazed sufficiently close to arouse all her fury; not waiting an instant, she darted upon our hero, and, drawing the little stiletto which she wore as a part of her Oriental costume, he might have been made to pay seriously for his frolic; for the rage of the woman was apparent in her closely set teeth and her fire-gleaming eyes. But Barry seized her arm, as she struck, and dropping his pole stood only on the defensive. The farce began to look greatly like tragedy. The enraged woman now shrieked and struggled. Her husband rushed out from the interior, armed with an axe. The clown again made his appearance, followed by the whole *troupe*, each seizing whatever weapon offered as he came. There were sailors, and Turks, and magicians, and even little Cupid's urchins, two feet high, whom papa and mamma were thus assiduously training in the way they should not go. These all confronted our unlucky jockey with the most uncompromising fury in their looks. He had spoiled the proceedings, thrown the assembly into the most admired disorder, and it was

justice only that doomed him to a condign punishment. But, if they were formidable, Barry now no longer stood alone. Tom Nettles was by his side, and the long pole which Barry had discarded was in his grasp.

"Hillabee boys," he cried aloud, "bring out your hickories!"

Twenty vigorous youngsters sprang out at the summons, and ranged themselves on the side of the amateurs. Great clubs of knotted hickories were already flourishing high; and, forgetting his late danger, Jones Barry already felt that he was a hero. He still maintained his grasp upon the Sultana, and seemed disposed to carry her off as the captive to his bow and spear, when the cool voice of Nettles commanded him to let her go. He did so; and the sleeping beauty, now wide awake, darted into the arms of the magician, who was her husband, upon whose bosom she sobbed convulsively, as at a providential escape from a great danger. Thus the parties stood, confronting each other; both looking firm and fierce enough, and threatening trouble. Not only did the whole *troupe* of equestrians range themselves for battle under the leadership of the clown, but one of the horses coolly marched in, covered with panoply, and, thrusting his head over that worthy's shoulder, seemed to promise him sufficient backing, and in truth looked very formidable. It was a scene; the clown, as a matter of course, opposed himself to Barry, who, armed with a pole, looked aghast at the twofold conflict before him, in the threatening aspect of both horse and rider. But Nettles fortunately knew the head men of the company. He said—

"My friends, this is altogether a mistake, which I can easily explain, and, I trust, easily reconcile. There's no fun in fighting, though we're by no means afraid, as you may see, to meet any number of men or horses. But there's no real cause of quarrel between us; and if you're agreed, we'll separate our forces. The boys of Hillabee will retire to their seats, keeping their hickories warm, lest we should want them again; and

the gentlemen of the circus will go on with their exercises as before. In the mean time, Mr. Barry and myself will retire with the manager here, and we'll adjust the difficulty in private together." A suggestion so politic was acceptable to all parties, though, once on the ground, the Hillabee boys did not relish the idea of returning without having done something glorious by way of showing how well their destructive faculties had been developed. Barry was a little scrupulous about entering the mysterious sanctum to which the clown and the Sultana had retired, but, having great confidence in Nettles, and being assured by the great coolness and confidence of the latter, he followed him and the manager into the place of retreat. Here he found himself amidst a motley group. Horses were staring them in the face on all hands. Some of the equestrians were already mounted. Here in one corner was a trunk and box; there a table and chair; and there a chest; and there a bundle; and there the uniform of a giant; and there the dozen masks and jackets of the clown. There, too, recovered from the dust and danger of the arena, was the unlucky colossal mask and headdress which our hero had torn off from his enemy at the first encounter. Nettles walked in with the air of a man perfectly at home.

"And now," said he, "Diavolo," addressing the clown, "let us begin the work of peace, as you begun the war. Prepare us one of those excellent brandy cocktails with which you tempted my friend to desperation. Had you known the diabolical thirst that's been troubling both of us the last three hours, you'd have known 'twas quite as much as your head was worth to mock us with anything half so delightful. Quick, now; and let there be peace between us!"

The arrangement promised to be satisfactory to all parties. The cocktails were speedily prepared; prepared in a nice-looking, brass-bound bucket, of dimensions to guarantee a sufficient taste of the beverage for all the *troupe*. The bowls were filled; hands were

shaken; eyes glistened; and, with the consent of the magician, his lovely Sultana freely bestowed the kiss of peace upon our hero. The example was gratuitously followed by the clown, whose embrace and salutation were distinctly stamped upon the front of Barry, in unequal decorations of vermilion and burnt cork. Their embraces seemed to affect the dextrous Tom Nettles with a serious delight.

"How beautiful," said he, "is it to behold brethren thus dwelling in amity together! What a spectacle! It is necessary that the audience should see it; that they should see that this is no mockery; but that the foes have freely exchanged forgiveness. Another draught from the bucket, gentlemen," said he, addressing Barry and the clown, "and then go forth that the people may witness those beautiful embraces."

Barry had no scruples about the dram, but he rather hung back at the proposal for the embrace in public. His reluctance disappeared with the draught. He swore that Diavolo was the best fellow in the world, and made the finest cocktails; and, with an arm about each other's waist, each bearing a cocktail in hand, they emerged from the canopy into the area, and drank to each other, and the audience. If war exulted in the previous scene, philanthropy was proportionally happy now. The audience were ravished. The old ladies wept. The old men thought it just as well; and the negroes were perfectly well satisfied; wondering only a little to behold a man drinking with such a capacious swallow, who had so recently been deprived of his head. All seemed perfectly well satisfied but young Hillabee, from whom some discordant hisses were heard to rise, while the unemployed hickories were made to clatter against the sides of the benches.

"There's a drop yet in the bucket," whispered the clown to his new comrade. The hint was not lost upon Barry. He returned to the sanctum, where he found his friend Tom Nettles. There they remained till the performances were over, and the crowd departed; when

they were invited to a hot supper with the *troupe*, in the great area of the pavilion. The invitation was not to be disregarded. The equestrians lived well; and Barry and his friend were both hungry. But, were it not so, the wishes of the latter would scarcely have had any weight upon our delighted hero. He *had* been the hero of the night, though after a somewhat doubtful fashion, it is true; but he had been conspicuous, and had come out of the scene with applause. Of course, he could not doubt that it was his appearance which was so warmly welcomed when he had come forth in the embraces of the clown. The clapping and shouting seemed to him the most grateful sounds to which he had ever listened; and the brandy cocktails were the most delicious of mortal beverages. It was a night of glorification. The supper-table was spread. His friend was placed on one side of the manager; he occupied the other. Beside him, sat the lovely wife of the magician, whose graciousness never even provoked the frowns of her mysterious lord. At first, Jones Barry felt a little squeamish on this subject. When she gazed so tenderly in his eyes, and suffered her finger to rest so impressively on his wrist, he felt a dubiousness, and looked his doubts at the husband. But he knew not the indifference of professional magic to those mortal subjects. The latter saw everything without discomposure; and, after a little turn of hesitation and doubt, our hero delivered himself up, soul and body, to all the intoxication of a conviction that he had won the heart of this most beautiful of all the creatures of Faery. They drank together, and whispered together. The hours waxed late. Barry sang a comic song, at the instance of Nettles, and, at the conclusion, was more delighted than astounded, as his Sultana, throwing her arms about his neck, and seating herself in his lap, in the face of all the assembly, called him the finest little fellow in the world. He did not know how he should recompense such devotion, but by forcing a great ring from his upon her finger. She coyly suffered him, in a mo-

ment after, to transfer the diamond breastpin from his to her bosom. He put it there himself; and all this the magician saw without seeming to regard it as in any wise improper. The next morning, Barry found himself where he had supped, sleeping upon one of the benches, with a bundle of straw under his head, and one of the horse-cloths, green and scarlet, spread above his body. Tom Nettles, as he opened his eyes, was to be seen standing with the manager at a little distance, and mixing a couple of rosy anti-fogmatics.

CHAPTER X.

THE HUMORS OF THE CIRCUS.

BARRY was not the man to suffer from headaches; but his stomach was one that needed to be fortified by tonics. The sight of his friend, when he discovered the occupation in which he was engaged, fully aroused him. He was on his feet in an instant, jerking up his trousers, and approaching Nettles with the haste of a person who fears that he may come too late. But there were some particulars in which Nettles never abandoned his companion. He was emphatically what young people call "a good fellow," and good fellowship implies the necessity of assisting your friend and facilitating his ready attainment of all desirable indulgences. In making an anti-fogmatic for himself, he had not forgotten his comrade. There was a huge vessel before him, where the beverage stood in waiting, and Tom, Jones Barry, and the manager of the amphitheatre, were soon engaged in a hob-a-nobbing match that didn't stop at a single stoop. Barry declared himself quite happy. He had enjoyed a pleasant dream of the magician's wife, and he naturally inquired after her.

"Look in," said Tom Nettles, with a smirk to the manager which Barry did not perceive, while he pointed the latter to the sanctum where the reconciliation had taken place the night before. Without a moment's hesitation, our little hero followed the finger, and found himself in the lady's dressing-room, her toilet only begun, and she, in the most loose undress in the world, employed before the broken mirror which hung from one of the uprights of the tent. Barry was astounded, and would have started back; but she saw him in the

glass, and, wheeling round, at once summoned him, though in the very sweetest accents, to approach.

"You are just in time," said she; "I wanted somebody to lace my jackets."

"Jackets!" exclaimed Barry, aghast.

"Yes, to be sure! Come now, you're a nice little fellow, I know. Let me see—you have small fingers. Show yourself diligent, and help me to fix myself. That man of mine never gives me any assistance. There he sleeps. Look at him. He will snore till noon, and never fairly wakens till it's time to dress for the performance."

She pointed to the end of a wagon that appeared under a corner of the tent, from which, sure enough, the ears of Barry detected a very decided snore. But this did not encourage him. He was utterly astounded at the new duty required at his hands. In all his experience, he had never before laced a woman's corsets—or unlaced them; and he scarcely knew how to understand the Sultana. But seeing his hesitation, Sultana-like, she stamped her little foot, and repeated her orders. She did not leave him long doubtful that she was in earnest.

"Come," said she, "what do you wait for? Is it because you're bashful? Well! at *your* age! But you needn't be, here! We know a thing or two! we've no false modesty here, I assure you. A leg's a leg, with us. We talk plainly, and are not the worse for it. We don't make a fuss about shadows as long as we keep the substance; and indeed, it's only those who have lost the substance that do. Come, stir yourself, and there's a kiss to begin with, by way of recompense."

A few moments found our hero awkwardly busy with the waist of the Sultana. While thus engaged, the manager and Tom Nettles came in.

"That woman," said the manager aloud, "has tired out every member of the *troupe* in lacing her. She will have her waist brought within the narrowest compass, and she breaks her cords daily in trying to make it

smaller. There's not a hand among us that she has not made sore in the abominable work, and now she takes to our visitors."

"And why not?" said the Sultana, with the air of the orient. "Is he not rewarded? It is not often he is permitted to study a good model."

"A little too round, madame," said the manager.

"Too round!" screamed the Sultana.

"Not a bit," said Tom Nettles, coolly interposing to span the waist. "An exquisite union of symmetry and strength."

"Strength!" demanded madame.

"Yes, to be sure; strength is necessary to grace, even in a woman. It's the mistake of too many of the sex that an air of feebleness is supposed to imply delicacy. It is rather the reverse. I wish to see vigor with grace; and a woman ought to seem as capable of a fine wrestle as of a fine sentiment."

"I've a great mind to trip your heels for that," said the Sultana, pertly.

"And if I am to take a fall, I should wish for no worse embrace than yours. But I leave Barry to the danger. He's a better wrestler than myself, and it strikes me that his lacing begins to look much more like hugging. Beware, Jones, or I'll tell your sweetheart."

Barry blushed to the roots of his hair.

"Has he a sweetheart? Is he in love?" demanded the Sultana.

"The danger is that he is in love with more than he can manage. Yesterday he loved but one woman. What lessons you have taught him, since that time, may be guessed from the way he performs the present operation. His lacing is very like embracing; and, if he goes on at this rate, he'll be for a wrestle in earnest."

"And if he is," said the magician, suddenly thrusting his head upward from the tail of the wagon, "I'll engage that Nell can throw him, or any man in company."

"Nell! Oh, you wretch!" cried the Sultana. "Nell!" She was Madame Zerlina, in the bill of the

performance. "Was ever such a monster! How he takes a woman's name in vain! Do some of you give him his dram, his phlegm-cutter, his antifogmatic, or whatever else he calls it, that he may sober himself to a civil way of speaking."

"Ay, Nell, bring it yourself."

The wife seized a tumbler that stood on a chest beside her, and held it to Nettles, who filled it from the flagon which had been brought in by the manager. She darted away the next moment to her magician, without seeming to remember that Barry, who, in his clumsiness, was still busy at the strings of her bodice, was compelled to follow after her, or lose the ends of the cord which had been confided to his care.

"There, you!" she cried, thrusting the drink into his clutches.

"Isn't she a beauty?" said the magician, with a leer to Barry, as he took the liquor. Barry could only smile and simper, and look silly.

"Beauty!" said she; "too much of a beauty for you. That's the way he flatters a woman, with Beauty! Beauty! on his lips, said half-asleep, and his mouth opening on the quart-pot, which alone made him waken up. You don't talk of my beauties now, but you feel them."

"Yes, indeed," said Nettles, "and he'll stay feeling them all day if you'll let him."

"Oh, Tom!" murmured Barry with a grin.

"Don't you mind him," said the Sultana. "Have you done now. There!" she exclaimed, wheeling about and grasping the unsuspecting Barry in her arms, giving him an embrace, before releasing him, that half took away his breath. "There, that's your reward. It isn't often a fine woman bestows a squeeze upon her sweetheart, and I only do it now to show you what your friend means, when he says that the beauty of a woman means vigor as well as grace. If you'd like to try the wrestle after the squeeze, say the word, and I'm ready for you."

"And I'll go a hundred on Nell against the field," cried the husband, from the wagon.

"Oh, beast there, with your Nell," cried the heroine, indignantly. "I've done everything, I've even thrashed him, to teach him good manners, but it's so much love and labor thrown away."

"But how about the wrestle? Who takes me up?" demanded the husband. The Sultana herself looked about her with the eye of a challenger. She was still only dressed in part, and her fine bust and figure afforded not a bad idea of Cleopatra. Her breasts seemed breaking through the very partial restraints upon them, and her arms, partly bare, were admirably white and rounded, revealing that equal union of muscular and flesh development which crowns the person with strength, without lessening its beauty. By this time, however, the admiration of Jones Barry had in some degree given way to misgivings and apprehension. His sense of the beauty of the woman was somewhat impaired by his disquiet at her boldness. The privileges to which he had been admitted had certainly shown no warmth or feeling on her part, and, in fact, she had treated him rather like a boy than a man. He was awed and abashed by her manners, rather than delighted with her charms; and the single squeeze which she had so gratuitously bestowed upon him was quite sufficient to satisfy him, without desiring the wrestle. He accordingly said nothing, while Nettles, with exemplary coolness, quietly remarked that "he, perhaps, should have no serious objection to the trial, could he be sure of *fair* play, but as he had never found that from a woman yet, he was not disposed to incur any unnecessary risk."

By this time one of the subordinates made his appearance, announcing breakfast in the amphitheatre. Nettles gallantly assisted the lady in completing her toilet, and this affair adjusted, he gave her his arm, and conducted her into the temple. He was followed by Barry, who felt nothing but envy at the ease and readiness with which his friend performed the duties of the courtier. The equestrians played the part of hosts

with great liberality and good-humor, and the meal lingered for more than an hour, in which, while the cates were various and ample, they constituted but a minor portion of the attraction. The coolness, readiness, great resource, experience, and anecdote of these performers furnished an unfailing subject of wonder to Barry. They seemed to know everything about the world, and some of them seemed quite at home on the subject of books. Zerlina, our Sultana, or "Nell," as the magician, her husband, persisted in calling her, was quite a dabbler in literature. She was read in the dramatic poets, and had an ambition for the stage, which some mysterious influence prevented her from seeking to gratify. She made frequent exhibitions, at the entreaty of Nettles, of her powers, while reading favorite passages, and thus increased the degree of awe and admiration which Barry already entertained for her. Her civilities were somewhat less free than they had been the night before, but they were still such as a matron might readily bestow upon a moderately grown boy. Poor Barry, though pleased with much of this sort of petting, was yet humbled by it ! and it was with something of a feeling of relief that he received a hint from Nettles that it was time to depart. The *troupe* were to exhibit another night at Hillabee, as the multitude, though diminished, was still sufficiently large to compensate the performance. There were extemporary races throughout the day, but generally with common horses. To these neither Barry nor Nettles greatly inclined, and their separation from their hosts of the hippodrome was pretty much a leave-taking of the field. Nettles had known the manager, the magician, and the fair Zerlina, some time before, and they parted as old friends. The Sultana squeezed Barry's hands with a frank earnestness, as she bade him good-by, telling him he was a nice fellow, and she should always remember him by his gifts, pointing to his ring and breastpin. It was with a twinge that our hero heard this speech. He thought sulkily of the half-maudlin tenderness of

the night before, in which he had been beguiled of jewels that he would prefer to see on very different fingers. The thoughts of Nettles, in some degree, took the same direction with his own. As they rode together homeward, and when they had fairly emerged from contact with the multitude, the former, with a quizzical smile, said to Barry—

"I say, Jones, what the d—l would your sweetheart, the fair Geraldine, have said, could she have seen you sitting in the lap of our Nelly, eh?"

"I didn't sit in her lap, Tom; she sat in mine."

"So much the better for the sight! What would she have said, or what could you have said, had she suddenly plumped in upon you when Nelly was in your lap, her arm about your neck, and giving you that smack of the lips, which seemed to you like wine from heaven? You got drunk almost instantly after it. You hugged her like a hero, until she couldn't stand it any longer, and broke away, as if she feared some harm from her magician husband."

"Oh! I didn't, Tom. Now don't you be telling that nonsense about."

"How can I help it, Jones, my good fellow? The joke is quite too good to be lost. For the one smack, the moment you had tasted it, you gave her a dozen, till she gave in and cried 'nough! 'nough!' as fervently as the fellow whose sockets are filling fast with sand from his enemy's fingers; and such a squeeze about the body that she fairly heaved again, though pretty well used to tight bracing."

"Never, Tom; never!"

"But it's a true bill, Jones. Then, you sung a comic song; and, in trying to get on the table for a Virginny reel, you slipped over into the sawdust, and lay there with a gurgle in your throat, as if you were trying to drink and sing at the same moment. You don't know, I suppose, who laid you out upon the benches?"

"No, Tom, I don't."

"Who, but Nell and myself? She took your arms,

and I your feet, and we swung you up, saying, all the while—

‘Warn ye once, warn ye twice,
Warn ye thrice, and away,
And away, and away, ye go!’

She brought the horse-cloth and spread over you, and the clown delivered a sermon over you, in which he said that, though a small man, your skin and stomach were capable of stretching to a brandy cocktail as readily and extensively as those of any man he ever saw; and not one of us said a word against it. You were treated gloriously, Jones, and you were glorious; but what would the fair Geraldine say to it all?”

“By gracious, Tom, she musn’t hear of it!”

“Had she only seen you lacing the jackets! Ha! ha! ha!”

“Tom, my dear fellow. Tom Nettles”—

“Looking for all the world like a great boy, with his big eyes spreading at the sight of an apple-tree filled with fruit, yet trembling to think of the steel-trap lying quiet in the grass below. Oh! Jones, Jones, if ever a man looked at a woman greedily, it was you, this morning.”

“Now, Tom! Tom! Don’t! Never!”

“I’ll swear it! You did! Jones, I’m afraid you’re a bad fellow among the women. You ought never to think of Geraldine Foster. She, at least, ought never to think of you. You don’t deserve her. She’s too good for you. You’ll make a bad husband. And I can’t think of suffering her to marry in the dark. She must know—”

“Tom, my dear fellow. Honor bright! But, I see you’re only joking.”

“Joking, indeed! No! no! There’s only one thing that will prevent me from interfering, and that is—”
He paused.

“Eh! What?”

"That there's no sort of use for it, as there's no sort of danger that she'll ever marry you."

"And why not, I wonder?"

"Why not! When you prefer to stay here at a horserace, to seeing her home. When you let her go off under the escort of your rivals, while you go a gander-pulling. When the circus is more grateful to you than her company; and when, not content with the performances of other people, you take another man's wife into your lap, and—"

"But, Tom, she don't know; she won't know—"

"These things are sure to leak out; and when it's known that you gave this pretty woman your ring and breastpin, and promised to remember her as long as you lived—"

"No, I'll be k——d if I did."

"And I'll be k——d if you didn't!" responded the tormentor.

"Tom, by the blazes, you're no friend of mine, or you wouldn't talk so. But, I know you of old. You only do it to worry me. You won't blab."

"Well, suppose I don't? What chance do you stand with the fair Geraldine when you neglect her so, and when you have such chaps as Ran. Hammond and Miles Henderson against you?"

"I don't care a curse for Hammond. She shows him less favor than all the rest. She's cross to him; and, for that matter, it don't seem to me that he cares a curse for her."

"Don't you believe it!"

"Well! let him come. It costs nothing, and it comes to nothing. She don't care for him."

"I'm not so sure of that!"

"She don't show it, at least. She's more shy of him, by far, than she is of me or Henderson."

"The shyness is in his favor. Was Nelly shy of you? No, indeed! She'd kiss you in sight of fifty people. But, you only be saucy, more than she is prepared to suffer, and she'd as soon dirk you as drink. This very

shyness of Geraldine Foster shows a feeling that she wants to hide. It's the same as saying, 'This man is something to me.' He has an effect upon her, and let him but pursue—"

"But he don't pursue."

"He don't! You don't know Ran. Hammond; and I tell you, Jones Barry, that if any man of you three ever marries that girl, it's Ran. Hammond. I know something of him, and I know something of woman, and if he isn't already as deep in her heart as you were in your cups last night, though without getting drunk by it, then I'm not one of the Nettles family."

"Well! that's speaking sure; for you *are* one of the Nettles family, and make yourself known wherever you go for a real son of the bush, if it's only by the feeling you produce. But you don't raise my skin, Tom; for, between us, I feel pretty sure that the game is to be mine."

"Ah! Ha! well!"

"The mother promises me—"

"The mother! You're more likely to marry the mother than the daughter. But it isn't the mother, exactly; and Mrs. Foster has no such influence over her husband's child as to say how that cat shall jump. If ever there was a woman who had a will of her own, it's that girl Geraldine Foster. I'm thinking that the mother favors you; but I don't believe she can do much for you, unless the daughter is a weaker vessel than I think her."

"Well! only you don't blab about this circus business, Tom—"

"I don't know how I can keep in, Jones. It's too good."

"Oh, by gracious, Tom, you must! I'll be hanged if I wouldn't fight my own brother, if he told upon me."

"Yes, but you'd hardly fight me, Jones, for you know I'd kill you; and then you'd lose your fortune, your sweetheart, and everything else. No! you won't

fight me, Jones; and if you talk in that sort of way, I shall have to come out with the story. I'll have to go to Mrs. Foster. I'll have to say, I must see Miss Geraldine. Then, I'll up and show her about the lap, and the squeeze, and the kisses, and the lacing, and the—"

"Tom, stop! By gracious, you must stop. Here's somebody coming after us!"

The conversation, thus interrupted, it is not our object to pursue. Nettles had no other purpose in what he said than to annoy his companion, though the opinions which he expressed with regard to the superior chances of Hammond in the pursuit of Geraldine Foster, in comparison with the two competitors, were honestly entertained. He dined that day with Barry, who kept bachelor's hall, and who recurred to the subject after dinner. Here again Nettles repeated his opinion. Barry did not seem satisfied that he should do so; and, in the course of the conversation, betrayed something of a hostile feeling towards Hammond, which the other was surprised that he should entertain.

"Somehow," said he, "he crosses me at every step. He bought that place of Wingard's, though he knew I wanted it—"

"But didn't he want it too?"

"I suppose he did, but—"

"But you overslept yourself, having been drunk at my house the night before, and didn't get to the sale in time."

"Yes, true! and the fellow got it for half the money I was willing to give."

"More lucky for both of you, perhaps."

"Then he gives Miles Henderson this bloody mare, that takes 'Geraldine' off her heels—"

"But you bought 'Geraldine' after he had given 'Sorella' to Miles—"

"That's true; but he advises him to run her, and tells him how to do it."

"He did one and not the other, and did only what any other might have done, and nobody have cause to

be angry. The truth is, Jones, you are in too bad a humor to do Ran. Hammond justice."

"And if, as you say, he stands the only chance with Geraldine Foster, sha'n't I have good cause to be in a bad humor? Now, you see, though you prove to me that all his influence upon my successes comes up naturally enough, yet, somehow, when you find a man always in your way—taking the start of you himself—helping his friends to do so—crossing you at this, and beating you at that—the worse from his not *trying* to do so; it looks as if he were your born enemy. You can't help feeling as if he was. But, I tell you, I'll not stand much more crossing; and some of these days, if things get worse, Ran. Hammond and Jones Barry will have to ask the question, before witnesses, which is the better man."

"Pshaw! pshaw! You haven't drank quite enough, Jones, for a sensible judgment in this matter. A few glasses more will give you the right pitch for thinking. Now, let me tell you, I won't have you make a Judy of yourself in this fashion. Hammond's a man whom you'll do well to have no quarrel with. He's an ugly customer. He'll be slow to take his gripe—won't do it, as long as he can decently help it; but when he does, he takes hold like a bulldog, and never lets go till his teeth meet in the flesh. You're a fool, Barry. You have fortune, and good liquors; enjoy yourself in all sorts of ways; keep blooded horses and run races; a fine parcel of gamebirds, and enjoy the cockpit like the Napoleon of Mexico. You keep the best of wines, and are not afraid to drink them; you can ride, run, and fight, and enjoy yourself in all three ways, in one day—now with a goose, and now with a clown; and have, besides, a devilish keen eye for the women, so that you'll be thinking of one seven miles off, while another's in your lap."

"No more of that, Tom; pass the bottle; and if you say so, we'll send out for a few larks and make a night of it."

"Agreed; a night of it."

CHAPTER XI.

A MAIDEN'S VOW.

LEAVING our good companions to make a night of it, let us follow the footsteps of the party from which we turned to pursue the more devious progress of the pair with whom we have so long loitered. We have seen that the ladies were well attended in their departure from the race-course. On this ride, our two gallants necessarily did their utmost to make themselves agreeable. Without being in anywise remarkable for his talent, Miles Henderson was a very pleasing and amiable gentleman. He could converse rationally and gracefully, but without ever rising into those subjects, or those portions of a subject, upon which, to converse well, most persons must first have learned to think independently for themselves. But, in the ordinary language of commonplace and society, Henderson could always be respectable; and, being an observing man, he had gathered a sufficient supply of material for chitchat to enable him, usually, to prove interesting to ordinary companions. We have seen him taking that side of the carriage upon which sat Mrs. Foster. This lady was comparatively young. She had succeeded to the arms and name of Mr. Foster at early womanhood, and when he needed a nurse rather than a wife. She had survived him, without altogether surviving her youth. A good natural constitution, vulgar health, a lively temper, and an exquisite feeling of satisfaction with herself, had served to keep her in good bodily condition. She was, in other words, a buxom widow, fair, fat, and forty; who did not wholly forget herself in taking care of the fortunes of her step-daughter. She was vain and giddy;

and, though satisfied that the devotion of Miles Henderson, not less than that of Randall Hammond, was wholly given to Geraldine, she was not the less satisfied with the external homage which she incidentally received in consequence. Sometimes, indeed, she seemed to forget the claims of her step-daughter wholly, and exhibited a degree of satisfaction at these attentions of the suitors, and an anxiety to monopolize them, which frequently occasioned a smile among these parties. It was one of her causes of dissatisfaction with Hammond, that he never suffered her to misconstrue his attentions. Approaching her always with profound civility, his address and style of conversation, when directed to her, were never of a kind to suffer her to be in any degree forgetful of the fact that she had a daughter as well as Jephthah; and the way to have won the heart of such a woman was to have shared with her, in some degree, a portion of that devotion which most women value beyond all other possessions, even where they do not design to secure or keep the worshipper. Hammond, perfectly aware of her character, knew exactly what she wanted. But he was too proud a person to make any sacrifices to her vulgarity or vanity. He was one of those men who feel that the course of true love not only does not usually, but that it cannot, in the nature of things, often run smoothly; and felt sure that a portion of his triumph must ensue from the capacity of his future wife to rise, through affection, superior to the discouragements of prejudice and domestic opposition. He was, perhaps, not unwilling to be known to Geraldine through the medium of doubts which nothing but real affection would attempt to overcome; and some knowledge of her character persuaded him, indeed, that this was really the most politic course for the attainment of his object. Accordingly, we have seen him betraying what would seem a degree of indifference to the game, which he did not feel. He showed no anxiety to take or keep possession of the field; no feverish desire to hold his ground in the presence of rivals; but, on the contrary, a calm and courteous readiness to share

all his opportunities with others; and, indeed, to forego them wholly on occasion, giving way to the advances of those who were notoriously his rivals. Mrs. Foster was greatly at a loss, for a while, to understand the policy of this seeming indifference; but her instincts enabled her to discover the truth, which her reasoning faculties never could have attained; the more particularly as she found that Geraldine Foster, flattered by the constant devotion of her suitors, was somewhat piqued by the dignified refusal of Hammond to engage in the common struggle. With a vulgar policy, the mother's object now was to impress upon our heroine an idea of the arrogance of Hammond; his pride, which refused the ordinary civilities which all lovers are prepared to bestow; and an insolent consciousness of superiority, which made him always anxious to deny the service which gallantry, and a sincere affection, would be only too happy to perform. His refusal to run his horse at Hillabee, as we have seen, was one of the instances which she found to produce the desired impression upon the mind of her *protégé*. To a certain extent she had succeeded in producing this impression. The proud and haughty spirit of Geraldine Foster, conscious of her charms, and accustomed to the devotion of the other sex, and the envy of her own, was mortified at the little seeming power which she possessed over almost the only man whom she had ever really desired to subdue. She felt his strength, his superiority. Her attention, when he spoke, acknowledged it; her anxiety for his coming declared it, even to herself; and the growing feeling of her dependence upon him made his apparent indifference only the more offensive to her vanity and painful to her heart. The step-mother had worked, not unsuccessfully, upon these feelings; but Geraldine was so much a creature of impulse that the work of months might be undone in a moment. A happy accident might bring the lovers together in explanation, and mutual sympathies, suddenly rendered active, and seeing under the influence of favoring circumstances, might render the determined

will of Geraldine such an ally of her heart as to defeat forever the subtle designs of the hostile mother. It was the game of the latter, therefore, to provoke disgust in the mind of the girl, to annoy her pride into resentment; and, seizing upon some particular moment of mortification, to force her into engagements which should be fatal to the hopes of Hammond. Her labors to this point had produced pique only, and not disgust in the bosom of Geraldine; and this feeling, Mrs. Foster had the sense to understand, was rather favorable than otherwise to the hopes of the lover. It declared his possession of a power, already, in the heart of the capricious beauty, which felt his neglect rather as a loss and a denial, than as provocation of scorn; and the step-mother trembled as she saw that it was far easier for Geraldine to feel the alleged neglect and indifference of Hammond than to defy or to resent it.

If he was not altogether conscious of the sort of game Mrs. Foster was disposed to play and was playing, his own was one that tended greatly to overcome and baffle it. His plan of operations has been already sufficiently described. It consisted simply in the maintenance of the most dignified civilities, and in foregoing no courtesies, in performing them with a grace as perfect as possible, and in studying how to interest the object of his attentions, without seeming to be engaged in any such study, or to possess any such interest. If the plan was wisely conceived, it was as dextrously carried out. Randall Hammond was no ordinary man. He was a person, emphatically, of character; with a strong will and fiery passions; but a stern, methodical, and well-ordered judgment, which enabled him to subdue himself at the required moment, and reject from his eyes all the disguises of prejudice, and from his tongue all the impetuous resolves of passion. He was never more fortunate in his game than when escorting the ladies from Hillabee. We have seen with what temper both of them left the ground. Mrs. Foster, quite dissatisfied with the results of the racing—as they not only left her favorite

beaten, but proved the correct judgment of Hammond in an exercise in which he did not himself indulge; and Geraldine, piqued and offended at the perverted language reported of Hammond, so conclusively confirming the representations of Mrs. Foster, and so disrespectful, seemingly, to Geraldine herself. Hammond soon discovered that something was wrong, and having sufficient clues to the character of Mrs. Foster, and perfectly aware of her feeling for himself, he readily understood that the mischief was in her. But there was no way to make a direct issue, and he was not one of that feverish race who refuse to leave anything to time. He was content to pursue his own game as if nothing had happened, and to make himself agreeable in spite of his enemy. His resources were all accordingly put in exercise, and even Henderson wondered at the exhibition of conversational powers which he never dreamed that his friend possessed. But friends are generally the last to appreciate the powers of one another, since they seldom recognize those feelings of mutual provocation by which alone they can be made to develop themselves. Gradually, Geraldine forgot her pique and disquiet, in the delight which she experienced at the racy remark, the keen point, the pleasant anecdote, contained in the conversation of her companion; and it was with feelings of vexation, at beholding a progress that she could not prevent, that Mrs. Foster threw herself back in the carriage, and surrendered herself to a protracted spell of silence and bad humor, answering Henderson only in monosyllables, and compelled, in spite of herself, to listen to the dialogue which seemed equally to show the indifference of both the parties to all her intrigues.

The cavalcade reached the residence of Mrs. Foster in this manner: Geraldine, if not perfectly reconciled to Hammond, forgetting for the moment all her causes of complaint; Miles Henderson a little dulled by what he saw of the success of his friend, but reconciled to his own apparent decline of fortune by the conviction that his fortunate rival was indeed his friend; while

Mrs. Foster brooded over other schemes for fomenting anew the displeasure of her step-daughter.

"Foster Lodge" was a place of considerable beauty. The immediate approach to it was through a broad avenue, nearly a mile in length, guarded and overshadowed from each side by the stateliest elms and oaks. The dwelling stood upon a gentle eminence, with a broad and sweetly-sloping lawn of green on each side of the avenue, extending nearly to the public road. The house was half shaded by great trees, a modest dwelling of two stories, with a piazza fronting the avenue, the roof of which, concealed by a parapet, was sustained by six great columns, that rose up majestically from the basement to the upper story.

Dinner was in waiting when the parties arrived. Ham and turkey smoked upon the board, and there were birds and fowl, eggs and milk, and the usual variety of vegetables, so certain to be found in all good farmsteads. Mrs. Foster was an economist. She was a farmer's daughter; a poor one too; and had been early taught in lessons of thrift and painstaking. These she had not forgotten in her improved fortunes. Indeed, they were her virtues. Her estates thrived in her hands; and, if not a good tutor for the daughter, she was a very good nurse of her property. This was ample, if not large. It was the misfortune of Mrs. Foster that she did not esteem it ample. This was one of her reasons for preferring Jones Barry to either of her present guests. The fact of his greater wealth, and that feebleness of character which made him subservient to Mrs. Foster's humors, were the chief sources of that favor which he had found in the good lady's sight.

Dinner passed off pleasantly. Hammond continued in the same humor which had accompanied him from the race-course. Even Mrs. Foster, herself, was sometimes compelled to smile at his sallies; and when she did not, it was only from the annoying conviction that they were rapidly undoing all her work. It was night before the party rose from table, and a short interval

was afforded for promenading in the piazza before tea was set. This was followed by music. Geraldine sang and played like an angel; this, at least, was the open-mouthed declaration of Jones Barry, in her own hearing; and both Henderson and Hammond were endowed with rich and tolerably well-trained voices. They accompanied the lady; while, at intervals, they resumed the conversation, either with herself or the step-mother. It was eleven o'clock before any of the party seemed to suspect the flight of Time, and then they were only apprised of the fact by Hammond rising to take his leave.

"But why not stay all night?" was the frank demand of Geraldine. Mrs. Foster addressed the same inquiry to Henderson. The latter looked to Hammond entreatingly; but, true to his policy, he declared the necessity for being at home early in the morning; and he had promised his mother, who would sit up and expect him, to return that night. He had five miles to ride.

"But you, Miles," said he to his friend, "you need not ride. You can stay."

This speech again worried both mother and daughter. It seemed strange that one who really loved a lady should encourage a rival to keep possession of her ear, and should give him opportunities. But Henderson felt ashamed of the weakness which prompted him to take advantage of the permission; and, somewhat desperately, declared his purpose to ride also. He had engagements also which required his early rising; and, in short, the gentlemen soon took their departure together; the ladies, one of them at least, sinking down upon the sofa with an air of sullen disappointment.

"A cold, haughty upstart!" was the exclamation of Mrs. Foster.

"Who, mother! of whom do you speak?"

"Of whom? Why Hammond. He is not capable of any feeling but pride. He is pride and ambition all over. He love! He has no more heart than a mill-

stone, and seems to look upon women only as so many creatures made to wait upon man, and minister to his wants and pleasures."

"Well! I wonder how it is you can see things in this light. Now, really, Mr. Hammond seems to me to be equally a man of feeling and sense. He speaks like one. He doesn't throw about him his sentiments, and he wastes no professions on the air; but he gives to every subject the proper sympathy that it seems to require; and it can't be denied that he can discuss the greatest variety of subjects, and in the most interesting manner."

"Oh! he has subtlety, and wit, and cunning!"—

"Cunning! Well, that is the very last word which I should ever have used in speaking of Mr. Hammond. I see no proof of it. He is too frank, too bold a man, to be cunning; and is particularly free from it, I'm sure, in dealing with ladies. Who ever hears him compliment one's singing or playing, except, perhaps, by his attention?"

"That's his cunning!"

"Well, I confess, I like it better than that silly artlessness which, whether you play well or ill, rewards you with the same indiscriminating flattery. But he goes further. He has told me plainly, on more than one occasion, where I made a false note, or sung with false emphasis, or blundered in any respect; for his ear is quite as good as his opinion is honest."

"That's his cunning again! He sees that you dislike the common talk, and he changes it to suit you."

"Something more than that, mother. What did he say to both of us last week about gentlemen proffering themselves, as a matter of gallantry, to pick up a lady's glove, or handkerchief, running across the floor to do so, when it lies at her own feet, and she might pick it up herself?"

"Well, and he is only a cub for his opinions."

"On the contrary, mother, I think he is quite right. I quite agree with him, that it is enfeebling,

and so enslaving, women, to do for them those things which it is proper for them, and easy, to do for themselves; that it makes us improperly dependent upon men, when we expect them to serve us in any besides substantial and weighty labors, which it is inconsistent with the nature of our sex to undertake; that it impairs the dignity of the man, and, while putting woman into a false position, renders him capricious, and makes her, in the end, the victim of a tyranny."

"All an artful notion to excuse his own cubbishness and want of gallantry."

"Well, now, mother, you certainly can reproach him for no want of courtesy and civility throughout the day. He has been with us, the only gentleman who never left us during all the racing."

"That's his policy. He stuck to *you*, as a matter of course."

"Yet, in the same breath, you describe him as lacking in the usual devotion—as being too proud and haughty, and—"

"I see, Miss Geraldine Foster, that your heart's set upon this match. I see that you'll throw yourself into his arms whether he will or no—"

"What you say, mother, let me tell you, is not likely to prevent me. But there's no danger of that. I confess, I think him a very superior man to any of my other suitors. You can't deny his superiority."

"By no means; he's a wit, and a colonel of militia, and they talk of sending him to the legislature or Congress; and, I suppose a young lady can't do better than to fling herself headlong into the arms of so promising a person. But I can tell you this, Miss Foster, that, when I was of your age, the man who swore that he knew no woman for whom he would run his horse, and that, too, when the young lady he was courting was entreating him to do so, would be courtesied out with a 'No, sir, I'm obliged to you, but beg to be excused.'"

"I don't know that Mr. Hammond is seeking me, mother, and it's very certain he is not courting me; but

this I can tell you, that, if ever he should do so, he shall be made to swallow that speech. He certainly, before he gets this hand, shall run a race for it—he shall!”

“Will you stick to that?” demanded the mother, eagerly.

“Will I not! It’s a vow; change it who can.” And the elevated form, the flashing eye, and extended hand, lifted upward as she uttered this rash resolution, to which the keen cunning of the mother had goaded her impulsive spirit, presented a fine subject for the dramatic painter.

“Only stick to that, Geraldine, and you’ll test his passion! You’ll see which he thinks of most; this lady of his love, or his iron gray. I tell you, his soul is full of mule-pride; he’s as obstinate in what he says as if the whole world was bound to give way to him.”

“I sha’n’t give way to him! He’ll find me as firm and proud as himself. He shall run his horse; he shall race whether he likes it or not, if he has any hope of me. But he does not think of me, mother. I’m sure you’re mistaken.”

This was said with an air of despondency, as the maiden threw herself upon the sofa and covered her face with her hands.

“And what if he does not?” responded the mother; “you surely are not so badly off for beaux that you need care whether he cares or not. I don’t think he cares much for anybody but himself. I tell you, he’s too proud for love of any woman, as you may suppose, when he openly declares that he will not run his horse for all the favors of the sex. Only you stick to your vow, and you’ll see what his love will come to.”

“He shall do it, if he seeks heart or hand of mine. He shall do it, he shall!” We may add that the excellent mother did not suffer her to forget the vow.

CHAPTER XII.

TOUGHNESS OF THE TENDER GENDER.

WE must skip, without notice, the events of several weeks, in which but little apparent progress was made on any hand. The parties met frequently, now at church, now at evening assemblages of friends, and still, as before, very frequently at the dwelling of our heroine. Randall Hammond continued his policy, though with a misgiving, which gradually increased with the increase of his passion; and an eye less anxious, and a mind less excitable than that of Geraldine's, would have readily detected, at particular moments, the proofs of this strengthening interest. But what with her own feelings engaged in the issue, and the continued and perverse hostility of Mrs. Foster to the claims of our hero, she was kept in the same dogged mood towards him in which we have beheld her while taking the strange vow recorded in the preceding chapter. He saw and felt the influence, but was without any means to meet and to contend with it; unless by the exercise of the same patience which he had hitherto displayed, and the unwearied exhibition of those talents and resources which had rendered him still agreeable in her eyes in the teeth of all her prejudices. His mother, it may be mentioned in this place, had expressed her doubts of the propriety of his seeking in marriage the hand of Geraldine Foster. Of the young lady, herself, the venerable dame knew nothing, except from hearsay; and rumor rather exaggerated defects than acknowledged virtues. The objections of Mrs. Hammond lay to the step-mother, whom she knew as a pert housekeeper employed in a neighboring family, when she was promoted

by Foster, then sinking with a feeble constitution, and equally feeble mind, into imbecility. She regarded her influence over the step-daughter as vicious and dangerous, and, whatever might be the individual endowments of the girl, she insisted upon their abuse and perversion in the hands of such a guardian. We have seen that she is right in some measure; but she overrated the influence of the one, and underrated the powers of resistance of the other. The girl, in reality, in many respects, controlled the woman. The latter, conscious of low birth and inferior education, though naturally clever, was submissive to the daughter in most social respects; and it was only where the latter was necessarily diffident, as in the case of her affections, that she exercised any influence over her sufficiently powerful to baffle the impulses of her own judgment. In affairs of the heart, or, rather, where young persons are called upon to decide between two or more favorites, the adroit suggestions of third parties have always more or less weight. The mind distrusts itself but too frequently when the affections are busy with its decisions; and it is because of this fact, that we find so many of that pernicious class called match-makers in the world. They interpose when the will of the interested person is at fault. They profess friendship, and it is at such a time that the poor heart longs for such a succor. They insinuate doubts, or suggest motives, and determine the scales, for or against a party, by such arguments or innuendoes as are most likely to influence the feeble nature which relies upon them. Mrs. Foster's hold upon Geraldine, in this matter, lay in the morbidly active pride of the damsel. This she contrived to goad and irritate by daily suggestions, in which the most innocent movements of Hammond were perverted. The fear of Mrs. Hammond, with regard to her influence upon Miss Foster, went still farther. She dreaded lest she should govern her in all respects; lest she should have tutored all her moods and feelings by the low moral standards by which the step-mother herself was influenced; and

have made her equally selfish and presumptuous with herself; coarse in her aims, narrow in her opinions; jealous of the worth which she never sought to emulate; and ambitious of society, not for its real advantages of mutual training and attrition, but for its silly displays and petty ostentations.

We need not repeat that, in these apprehensions, Mrs. Hammond labored under error; but she did not the less entertain them. A long and serious conversation with her son, the day after his return from the races at Hिलabee, was devoted to this subject. In this conversation, she freely declared her objections to the match with such a person, related all that she had heard of Geraldine, and told her son all that she knew of the step-mother, concluding with an earnest entreaty that he would look in some other quarter for the exercise of his affections. She was even good enough to mention the names of two or three young ladies of their acquaintance, whose charms were considerable, and against whom there lay no such objections as she entertained for Miss Foster.

But the son, though grateful for this counsel, as frankly told his mother that it fell upon unheeding senses; that he was really and deeply attached to Geraldine; that he was not blind to her faults, and knew her to be equally proud and eccentric; but her pride, he said, arose from a high spirit, sensible only of right purposes, and her eccentricities were the growth of a superior intellect, under an irregular education, and were due in some degree to a consciousness of independence, falsely founded, perhaps, of the circle in which she moved. Like other lovers, Hammond expressed the opinion that her eccentricities would certainly be cured by marriage, particularly under the admirable domestic system which he was prepared to establish. For the step-mother, he had nothing to say. He had certainly no defence to offer. She was pretty much the woman that his mother had described her. Besides, she was evidently hostile to himself. But her influence over her step-daughter was nothing. If exercised in any way, it was only in

opposition to himself, and he could readily understand how she might operate successfully by artifices, particularly in dealing with a person who was herself truthful and unsuspecting, where she might never attain any influence by open authority. He continued by repeating the assurance to his mother that he felt too much interested in the lady to forego his attentions, but that he should watch her conduct narrowly, and not risk his peace upon any object to whom such objections could apply as those which she had urged. He concluded by expressing his desire that his mother would visit Mrs. Foster, and see the young lady for herself. There was no good reason why she should not do so. It is true she did not like Mrs. Foster, but if people visited only those whom they liked, society would be almost empty of individuals. Mrs. Foster had called upon her, and had invited her to her house. True, she might remember her as a pert housekeeper, but she was now a householder; and if pert in this capacity, it was a fault which could be charged upon a thousand others. At all events Mrs. Foster was no worse than her neighbors, so far as the world was permitted to see. And to recognize her as everybody else did, would in no degree impair the ancient position which Mrs. Hammond held in the public esteem. If any other reason were wanting, it was undoubtedly to be found in the probability of her son establishing an alliance with this very family, when, as a matter of course, all difference of relative position must be overthrown forever.

The worthy old lady sighed as she acknowledged the truth of these reasonings, and prepared to submit to them. At an early day her carriage was ordered, and Mrs. Foster was confounded when she heard that the equipage of the stately old lady was in progress up the avenue. This was a triumph to her vanity which would have been eminently gratified, but that it seemed to operate against her project of marrying her daughter to Barry. One of her favorite topics of denunciation, where Hammond was concerned, was his own and his

mother's arrogance; and the neglect of the latter to return her visits was an argument for the truth of her assertions. But neither Geraldine nor herself was insensible to the compliment paid by this visit. Mrs. Hammond was at the very head of society in that neighborhood. Her position was unquestionable. Hers was one of the oldest families; and the dignity which she maintained, along with the virtues of benevolence and hospitality—to speak of no other of the Christian charities—all of which were eminently conceded to her, rendered her quite as much beloved as respected. It had been rather injurious to Mrs. Foster's pretensions in society, that Mrs. Hammond had not recognized them. That she did so now, at this late day, was undoubtedly something gained; but the perverse pride in her heart prompted a feeling of resentment at the visit so long deferred, and she suddenly exclaimed to Geraldine—

“We won't see her. She has taken her time about it, and we will take ours. Let Clara go and tell her we are not at home.”

“No, indeed, mother! that won't do. You will gain nothing by it; for people will only say, you have done it for spite. Mrs. Hammond is not a woman to be slighted. However we may feel her neglect of us, she is a lady of worth and character; and I can't think of showing her any resentment. Besides, I feel none. I remember her when she used to visit my own dear mother, though I was but a child; and I have heard father speak of her as his friend, when he needed friendship. Indeed, I have heard that she lent him a large sum of money to save his mills; and, in the settlement of the affairs of the estate with Lawyer Griffin, I see the repayment only took place the year before my father died. No! she has had some reason, I suppose, for keeping away, and that she comes now shows that these reasons exist no longer. We *must* see her. I feel nothing but respect for Mrs. Hammond.”

This was said in a way to silence opposition. But the step-mother had the last word, framed in a fashion

that she had been too much accustomed to employ of late to forego very readily.

"It's just as you will, my dear. You have very good reasons for what you say; but I rather think that if your heart did not incline so much to seeing the son, your reasons wouldn't be half so good for seeing the mother. Take care now; I see what's coming. You will be overawed by the consequential old woman, until you submit to the consequential young man, and then good-by to all your freedom. I know you, Geraldine Foster; you'll be imposed upon by the high heads of these people, until you forget all your resolutions."

"And I tell you, mother, that you know nothing about Geraldine Foster, if you think she is to be imposed upon by anybody. I am—"

"Well, hush now, before the old witch hears you. She's coming into the parlor now."

Geraldine muttered something about the improper use of the epithet old witch, and Mrs. Foster sniggered at the rebuke. The affairs of the toilet proceeded in silence, and the daughter was the first who was ready to descend.

"She shall wait for me," said the mother, proceeding very leisurely. Geraldine left the room, and descended to the parlor. She felt a little awe, certainly, as she entered the room and encountered the tall, stately form of the venerable woman, with her dark dress, and her formal mob cap. But the benevolent manner, and the sweet tones of the old lady's voice reassured her.

"I know you, my child, by your dear mother. She was my intimate friend. She was a kind and loving person. You have her eyes and mouth. Your forehead and nose are your father's, and you are tall; like your father also. Your mother was rather short, but she was so well made that she did not seem so, unless when standing close to others. If you have her heart, my child, as you certainly have all her beauty—"

The old lady squeezed the hands of the girl, but failed to see the humid witnesses which were gathering

in her eyes. Those of the speaker were already wet. The sympathies of the two were becoming active, and Mrs. Hammond had already reproached our heroine with having failed, since her return home, after a lapse of several years, to seek out one of her mother's most intimate friends; and Geraldine, who had been kept from doing so only by the perverse influence of her step-mother, was awkwardly seeking to account and apologize for the neglect, when the door was flung wide, and Mrs. Foster sailed into the room, blazing in her best silks, and making as formidable a show of trinkets as if she were the belle of the evening. At her appearance, the whole manner of Mrs. Hammond seemed to change. She drew up to her fullest height her tall, erect person. Her eye assumed a severe simplicity of gaze, which entirely changed its expression; and her reception of the new-comer, Geraldine could not but remark, was singularly unlike that which had met *her* appearance. The truth is, the absence of simplicity, the obtrusive ostentation of Mrs. Foster's manner, a mixture at once of dignity and assumption which was neither confidence nor ease, brought out all the native superiority of her visitor. Besides, she remembered her as the usurper, foisting herself by cunning upon the weakness of a dying man, and succeeding to a position in society for which her training and education had not prepared her. The first meeting between the two, already prepared to be belligerents, was productive of impressions which strengthened their mutual dislikes and distrusts. Mrs. Foster was boisterous and confident; talked recklessly, as if her purpose had been to show nothing but scorn of all the usual modes of thinking and feeling, all the forms and manners, which her guest had been wont to hold in reverence. The deportment of Mrs. Hammond was the reverse of this; but it was so full of a dignity jealous of assault, and resolute against intrusion; so cold in its stateliness, so stern in its simplicity, that our heroine, though vexed at the bearing of her step-mother, was not less chilled and

offended by that of her visitor. We need not detail the progress of the interview. The call was a very short one, and the parties separated mutually dissatisfied. Mrs. Hammond, chafed with the impertinence of Mrs. Foster, and disposed to see in Geraldine (who had been very quiet) nothing but the susceptible creature whom the step-mother had fashioned in all respects to resemble herself; while the latter, though not exactly satisfied with herself, was yet confirmed in all her grudges and ancient hostilities, as she felt the cold supremacy of that bearing which she had bullied, without being able to forsake or overcome.

"There," said she to Geraldine, when her visitor had been bowed down the steps; "there you have her in full; the queen of Sheba, with her head in the clouds and her feet among the stars. She's as proud as Lucifer. You'd have a fine chance with her as a mother-in-law. She'd rule you with a rod of iron. Do you smile, it's a look; do you laugh, it's a scold; would you dance, it's a sermon; and so day by day, until you're broken down with the sulks and sours: no milk could keep sweet long under that face of vinegar."

Geraldine was silent. She, too, had been disappointed the visit. She could see that there was something wrong in the carriage and language of her mother; but unfortunately, her ear had become too much habituated to the modes of speech and thinking of the latter to feel, in full force, the improprieties of her conduct; and she regarded the stern deportment of Mrs. Hammond as totally unprovoked by anything that had taken place. She was quite ignorant of that past history of the step-mother which their visitor knew too well, and it was really in some degree as the sincere friend of Geraldine's own mother that the soul of the old lady revolted at her substitute. But this the young lady was yet to learn. She, as we have said, was silent; while Mrs. Foster ran on in a strain cunningly calculated at once to express her own hostility and to alarm the fears of Geraldine. She painted the tyrannical mother of Ham-

mond subduing all the spirit of his young wife, of any wife whom he should bring home; restraining all her innocent desires, chiding her sentiments, and keeping her in such a bondage to her antiquated notions, as would effectually quell all her sweetest impulses, and embitter all her youth with the mere caprices of authority. From the mother she passed, by a natural transition, to the son. He was the true child of his mother; cold, stern, unbending, despotic. She was eloquent on this theme; she recalled and dwelt upon, with perverse ingenuity, every incident that could serve for its illustration, and it was only when she broke down with utter exhaustion that she was content to stop. Poor Geraldine said nothing. She was certainly impressed by what she heard. The speech of Mrs. Foster was not without ingenuity. Yet the girl thought of Hammond with kindly feelings. It was only when her temper was roused that she was disposed to side completely with her cunning and dishonest counsellor. Somehow, she could not concur with her now, even in respect to the stately mother. Though chilled to the heart by the progress of the interview, she yet remembered the sweetness with which it had begun.

How different had been the deportment of the old lady before her step-mother made her appearance! How kindly had she spoken; with what affectionate remembrance did she seem to dwell on the personal appearance and the virtues of her mother; and, surely, she had seen the gathering tears in her soft blue eyes at the very moment when she felt that her own were filling. Whence, then, the change? how could the appearance of her step-mother have effected it? There was a mystery in this, and the aroused heart of Geraldine brooded over it; and daily, with an increasing pleasure, did she remember the sweet words and the sad tears which the mother of Hammond had shared with herself when the two were alone together.

CHAPTER XIII.

SOME TALK OF MARRIAGE.

BUT an event was now at hand which was calculated to divert the thoughts of Geraldine Foster into other channels. Her seventeenth birthday was approaching, a period of immense importance to all young damsels. It was destined to be regarded as such in the present instance. Already, for more than a month previous, the rumor had gone abroad through the neighboring country, of a great *fête* to be given at the "Lodge." Supplies for the occasion were already making their appearance. Wagons from Savannah and Augusta, laden with good things, were seen arriving, and public expectation was on tiptoe for the event. In due season our young men were all honored with invitations to the birthday *fête*. Mrs. Hammond was also included in this compliment, though Mrs. Foster was pleased to say, while her step-daughter was penning the invitation, that she knew "very well that the haughty old hag would never come again." She was mistaken, as we shall see hereafter. The truth is, as regards herself and her own feelings, it never would have been the wish of Mrs. Hammond to darken the doors of a lady like Mrs. Foster, for whom she could never feel esteem; but the case was altered in respect to Geraldine. She regarded the latter as the innocent, though perhaps misguided child of a very dear friend, and on this account alone she was prepared to treat her with solicitous consideration. There was yet a better reason. Mrs. Hammond had now satisfied herself that the affections of her son were really engaged to the maiden; too deeply engaged, indeed, to render prudent any farther exhortations and

warnings on her part. She resolved, therefore, instead of discouraging with a vain importunity his pursuit of the object, to yield herself to his cause, and contribute, as far as it would be becoming in her, to the promotion of his wishes. She distinguished, accordingly, between the girl and the silly step-mother; and, while revolting at the offensive frivolities and forwardnesses of the latter, was prepared to take the other, as the future wife of her son, to her most affectionate embraces. This determination led her to accept an invitation which she otherwise might have treated with indifference. It must not be supposed, however, because we find Mrs. Foster speaking in offensive terms of Mrs. Hammond, that the visit of the latter had been disagreeable to her, or that she had failed in returning it. This was very far from being the case. While she disliked to meet with the old lady, from a real feeling of inferiority, and from a painful consciousness that Mrs. Hammond knew more of her real history than anybody else; she yet felt the importance, in a social point of view, of appearing to maintain an intimacy with one of a rank so unquestionable. She soon, with Geraldine, returned the visit in which she had behaved with so much insolent familiarity; and was received with the sweet benignity, mingled with dignity, which so becomes a well-bred lady in the character of a hostess. Geraldine could not but feel the superiority of bearing in this venerable representative of a passing age, to that to which she was accustomed; and could scarcely reconcile the gentleness and meekness of the old lady's manner and tone with that which was so commanding in her carriage and so impressive in what she uttered. True to her decision, and regarding the possible relation in which the maiden might yet stand in regard to her son, Mrs. Hammond was particularly anxious to please her younger visitor. While the three ladies traversed the garden, which was a very ample and beautiful one, she loitered with the younger of the three, and again renewed the subject of her intercourse with her mother. The garden itself afforded a sufficient reason for recalling the subject.

Mrs. Hammond's taste for flowers had been greatly influenced by the superior sympathies, for these lovely creations, of the *first* Mrs. Foster; and it was in the power of the former to indicate to Geraldine a fact, of which she was now for the first time made conscious, that the garden at the "Lodge" had been laid out exactly of the size and plan of that which she now examined. Its fate, however, had been very different. While the latter was blooming in full perfection and variety, the former had grown into a waste with weeds. Geraldine only resolved to make amends to the memory of her mother by restoring her favorite fruits and flowers. The judicious manner of Mrs. Hammond, the equal delicacy and adroitness with which she had again managed to speak to the young girl of her mother, and to show the tender interest which she herself felt for her memory, were by no means thrown away upon the daughter, who was sensibly touched, as well by the manner as by the matter of her venerable hostess. Mrs. Foster beheld this with some disquiet, and more than once contrived to divert the conversation to other and far less interesting topics. She herself was treated with the greatest deference, Mrs. Hammond being at pains, for the sake of the ward, to treat the guardian as if she fully deserved to be such a custodian. At the end of an hour, the visitors were prepared to depart, and Randall Hammond made his appearance just in time to see the ladies to the carriage.

A few days after came the invitation to the *fête*.

"You will go, dear mother, will you not?" was the inquiry of Hammond, uttered in pleading accents. She was disposed to plague him, and expressed herself doubtfully.

"I don't know. I am old. These night parties are not good for me, and I don't enjoy them."

"But, for my sake, mother."

"I don't know but that, for your sake, I ought to stay away. I am half afraid to give any encouragement to this pursuit."

"Oh, don't say so, mother; don't think so."

"Oh, but I must think so, Randall," said the old lady, with real gravity; "for I confess I am not satisfied that Geraldine Foster is the lady for you. That foolish step-mother has done her best to spoil her."

"But she is *not* spoiled."

"Perhaps not. Of that I can say nothing; but what does the world say?"

"Mere scandal, I warrant you."

"Nay, nay, Randall; we can't so easily dismiss the popular report. We hear every day of her eccentricities; of her riding wild horses without a saddle, leaping high fences, and even threatening John Estes with horsewhip and pistol."

"Pshaw, mother! How ridiculous!"

"Ridiculous, it may be, but not wholly wanting in truth. Our old neighbor, Jacob Barnes, tells me that he has it from Peter Estes, the brother of John."

"Be assured, a wholesale falsehood. This John Estes was the overseer for Mrs. Foster, and was dismissed by her for neglect and insolence. He no doubt revenges himself by all sorts of falsehoods. He is a worthless fellow, I know; but if I hear him at his slanders, let him but cross my path with them, and I'll—"

"Come, come, Randall! none of that. You are only too ready to take up the cudgels for other people. You are not yet authorized to be the champion of Mrs. Foster or Geraldine; and I'm afraid, as I hear the story, that the young lady can be her own champion, and will be apt to reject your assistance. Barnes says, on the report of Peter Estes, that, when John Estes demanded his full year's wages, Mrs. Foster ordered him from the house; and he, not seeming in a hurry to obey her, Miss Geraldine threatened him with the horsewhip, and seemed disposed to use it. At all events, as Barnes phrases it, John Estes, in fear of bodily danger, made off in double-quick time. There's no doubt something in it."

"Yes! no doubt he deserved the whip for his insolence; and in her indignation she told him so."

"But Estes reports that she got her father's pistols, and said she was not afraid to use them; and professed to be as expert with them as any man."

"Pshaw! another exaggeration, quite as easily explained. How naturally would a young woman wish that she were a man to pistol an insolent fellow who dared to bully her at her own fireside!"

"Still, my son, you would prefer that such a speech should be made by Mrs. Foster rather than the daughter?"

"I don't know! I don't see any harm in this expression of a strong and becoming indignation by a young lady. Geraldine is, no doubt, high-spirited and impulsive. Perhaps, too, she may be called and considered eccentric, as she undoubtedly possesses talents. But I have seen nothing in her conduct which can at all justify these stories; and I ask you, dear mother, whether you have?"

"You know, my son, that I have seen her very seldom since she was a mere child."

"Ah! mother, the long and short of it is, that you would rather see me married to that stately dowd, Miss Arabella Mason, or that cold Grecian, your amiable beauty, now rapidly becoming an antique, Miss Jane Hallett, or—"

"Randall, these are young ladies whom I very much esteem," said the mother, gravely. "Either of them, in my opinion, would make you a much *safer* wife, if personally less beautiful, than Geraldine Foster. But I have no prejudice against her. On the contrary, if I were not stunned and alarmed by what I hear of her wildness, I should prefer that she should be your wife in preference to anybody else. You have heard me speak of her mother, who was very dear to me. Had she been so fortunate as to enjoy her mother's guardianship, instead of that of the coarse, weak woman who succeeded her, I should have had no apprehensions.

I offer no opposition to your pursuit. You are of age, and I only entreat that you do not allow the beauty, and the more piquant attractions of the young lady's wit, to blind you to her deficiencies. I will go to the *fête*, since you wish it; nay, I had meant to go before you spoke to me, if it were only to show how readily I can sacrifice my own scruples, whenever such sacrifice becomes necessary to my son's happiness."

"Thanks, dear mother, many thanks! You will not regret, you will not repent, your indulgence. You will see Geraldine in better aspects, the more you know her. These reports are mere silly exaggerations, easily raised upon a vivacity of character, and a freedom of carriage, which are not common to our country damsels. I think as little of the step-mother as you do; but I doubt whether Mrs. Foster can greatly influence Geraldine. She is quite too independent for that."

"No doubt, provided the attempt to influence is apparent, but this is very doubtful. People like Mrs. Foster, sprung from a low condition to one for which they are unfit, are very apt to exercise habitual cunning, and they operate their ends with secrecy; while persons of very independent temper, like Geraldine, particularly where they pride themselves on their independence, are very apt to be taken in by the very persons who affect to acknowledge their want of power. Art, in this way, operates, by successful subtleties, in blinding the judgment of superior will; and the more stubborn the person, the more easily deluded when in contact with such an agency. This I suspect to be the true relation between the two. Mrs. Foster I *know* to be artful in a high degree. She had never succeeded in becoming the wife of Henry Foster, but for the practice of her housekeeper-cunning."

"Mother, you are harsh."

"Randall, you are right! But it is in your ears only that I speak these opinions, and they are meant to guard you from mishap. If, as I suppose, you are resolute to

address Geraldine, I warn you that Mrs. Foster is secretly working against you."

"Ha! how do you know it?"

"I know *her*; she cannot but work against you, being what you are; and the report goes that she openly favors this little person, Barry."

"You hear that too from this old chronicler, Jacob Barnes?"

"Barnes is a simple and an honest creature, who reports things just as he hears them. But his reports, Randall, and my opinions, are only to be valued as they teach caution. Pursue your object steadily, if you will, but with an eye open to the degree of influence which this lady exercises over her ward. By this you may judge whether you can succeed with the one, without regard to the prejudices of the other. I should be sorry to see my son rejected, even where I would not have him seek."

This concluded the conversation, which was interrupted by the arrival of Miles Henderson. He too had received his invitation for the *fête*, and he came over to consult with Hammond in regard to it. The two friends wandered out into the fields, and, under the shade of quiet trees, they conferred frankly about their mutual feelings and prospects. There were no reserves between them; and, without hesitation, Henderson showed his friend the draft of a letter to Geraldine, in which he had made his proposals. The letter he himself designed to give her, at some favorable opportunity, on the day or evening of the *fête*. This festivity contemplated a *picnic* in the woods, and by the banks of a small fishing-stream and mill-seat called Gushlynn; and at evening, music, dancing, and other sports at the "Lodge," and in the grounds, which were to be lighted up for the occasion. All these arrangements had already transpired, and were freely discoursed of by the multitudinous mouth of rumor. Henderson did not doubt that he should find more than one fitting occasion, during the day or night, on which to present his *billet d'amour*.

"It is very well, Miles; fairly and properly written. For my part, I have to move with caution. I am too decidedly the object of Mrs. Foster's dislike not to feel how doubtful are all my chances; for, though I sometimes fancy I have made a favorable impression upon Geraldine, yet her changes are very sudden, and she is yet so young as not to feel the importance of shaping her conduct consistently after deliberate resolve. I do not deceive myself as to the danger which I stand from this caprice, which may invite and beguile, only that it may deny and condemn; not that I suppose Geraldine the woman to behave thus with any previous design. But she is so much the creature of impulse, and is so likely to be governed, in some degree at least, by that spiteful mother-in-law, that I feel more and more dubious the more closely I approach the subject. It is barely possible that I, too, shall propose to her on the day of the *fête*. This will depend, however, entirely on the temper which she appears to be in, and upon the sort of opportunity which is afforded me. Of late, Mrs. Foster seems disposed to keep watch upon me, and, by her constant presence, to baffle everything like private or interesting conversation with Geraldine. I can only deal in common-talk and generalities, which lead to nothing."

"Which lead to a great deal, Randall. Your generalities have always a meaning in them. I see that Mrs. Foster watches you more closely than she does anybody else, and that only proves to me that she considers you the most dangerous. But you make more out of the restraint than anybody could beside yourself. It's evident enough that, though you talk generalities only, as you call them, they are such particularities to Geraldine that she gives them the best attention; and, if you don't seem to say anything meant especially for her ear, it's very certain she appropriates it all more eagerly than any other. The truth is, Randall, I'm more jealous of you than ever, and this is the very reason, that you get on so successfully in fixing the interest of Ge-

raldine in spite of the clear dislike and the crossplays of the step-mother. I'm only going to propose now, to get my answer. I don't see that I've the least chance or hope. She treats me civilly, and Mrs. Foster is a great deal more kind to me than she is to you; but, after all, though I try hard to find a meaning in this civility, it amounts only to this, that I don't behave amiss, and the attention of a young fellow is never disagreeable to a miss. But the suspense and anxiety vex me, and so I'm going to make an end of it, and either make the spoon or spoil the horn."

"With such feelings, Miles, I should not propose; but the subject is one which I dare not undertake to counsel you upon. You will, of course, do as you please."

"Oh! I'm sworn to give in this paper. There may be more hope than I have reason for. A man, who is really in love, can't always see his chances for himself; and Geraldine Foster is the first and only woman I've ever seen that I really wished to marry. I'll try her, at all events; and if nothing better comes of the trial, it will at once put an end to my anxiety."

"Be it so, Miles. You hear what I tell you. I shall prepare no letter. I'll leave it to circumstances to determine. If opportunity offers, and she seems favorable, ten to one that I shall declare myself. If not, I have only to keep quiet and wait a better season."

"Yes; but you may wait too long. 'Spose she takes me?"

"My dear Miles, she couldn't take a better fellow. Next to myself, I should rejoice to see you in possession of the prize."

"But suppose, seeing no chance of you, and tired of waiting, she takes this beauty, Barry?"

"Then he's welcome to her, and she wouldn't be the woman for me. I should rejoice in my escape."

"Randall, you're a cursed sight too proud."

"No, Miles, I only put a proper value upon a wife. The girl who is in such haste to get a husband as to

marry any that offers rather than lose a chance is worth no man's having."

"I don't know but you're right."

While upon this fruitful subject, let us pass from the two friends to another of the parties to our story, whose feelings, about this period, were similarly concerned with the fair Geraldine, and the approaching festivities. Sunday was usually chosen by our excellent acquaintance, Jones Barry, for his dinners. He was then apt to call in his acquaintance, to see his friends, and make a day of it. He never denied himself on these days. He was a bachelor, a man of wealth, and enjoyed a certain degree of impunity. He at least assumed that one, whose behavior was so uniformly good during the week, should be permitted his enjoyments on the Sabbath. Of course, we quarrel with no man for his opinions. We are indulgent, and only propose to show his practice under them.

Jones Barry had a cleverish cook, who could make mock turtle to perfection, and dress a haunch of venison to the equal satisfaction of epicure and hunter. He loved good things, and never stinted himself at any time; but it was on Sunday that he particularly laid himself out to be happy. The first day of the week had come in which the birthday *fête* of Miss Foster was to be celebrated. He had several guests that day, and an excellent dinner. There was our old friend, Nettles, among the former, to whom one end of the table was assigned. Joe Blake, Dick Moore, and Tom Lechmero formed the rest of the company. The dinner passed off gloriously. When the cloth was removed, the host, raising his glass, cried—

"Fill, gentlemen, and drink to the health of the fair Geraldine."

"Lady or filly?" inquired Nettles.

"Come, Tom, don't be disrespectful. She may yet be my wife."

Nettles repeated the question.

"Lady or filly, Jones?"

"You're a beast," cried Barry; "drink before I send the bottle at your head."

"Do nothing of the kind, I beg, until you've emptied it at least. But still let me ask. I drink, you see; for it matters not much to your friends whom you marry; but which is it, Jones? We know you love the lady, at least you say so, and it's very certain to everybody that you really love the mare. Now, if a Roman emperor made one of his mares a divinity, and fed it on silver *crowfoot* and golden ears, handsomely cracked in a marble basin, there's no reason why a Georgia planter shouldn't promote his filly by marriage."

"Pshaw! that's all nonsense about the Roman emperor."

"True, every bit of it, except that I have my doubts about the gender of the beast. But tell us truly. Out with it like a man. Are you to be married to the fair Geraldine?"

"To the lady, perhaps."

"Is it fixed?"

"Not exactly, but so nigh there's no fun in it."

"Ah! then you have proposed, Jones?"

"No—not to Geraldine herself, but the mother goes for me."

"But that's not the daughter."

"It's something towards the election."

"Don't believe a word of it, Jones," answered the reckless Nettles. "It's like your racehorse calculations. You'll be beaten when you're most certain."

"And who's to beat me, do you think?"

"Why Ran. Hammond, to be sure."

"He! he stands no more chance than my grandmother. Why, Mrs. Foster hates him as she does poison."

"What of that? I can tell you she wouldn't hate him long, if he was willing to marry her instead of the daughter. But her hate don't hurt. That girl has a will of her own, if ever woman had; and Madam Foster's dislikes won't help your likes, I can tell you."

"She as good as tells me I'm sure of Geraldine."

"Many a slip betwixt the cup and the lip. Now look you, Jones, my boy; I like you well enough; your dinners are excellent, and you keep the best wine decidedly in the country."

"Do you really think so, Tom? You *are* a judge."

"You do—only you keep it always too near your own plate."

"There it is—Blake, hand that bottle to the ox."

"Ox! well, I suppose it is because I'm an ox that you offer me a horn."

"Take two of them, that you may be finished."

"But I'll not finish there."

"Go ahead!"

"Well, as I was saying, I like you and your dinners well enough. You're a good fellow in your way, though you have too great fondness for women of the circus."

"Tom! Tom! mum! Honor bright, old fellow."

"Out with it, Nettles!" was the cry of Joe Blake, and the rest.

"Another time, boys, another time. Let's see, where was I? Ah! I was saying,—but, to begin fair, I'll give you a toast. Fill, if you please."

"Fill, gentlemen," said the host. "Fill to Tom Nettles, charged."

"Here's to Ran. Hammond; a stiff fellow, perhaps, but a real man and a true gentleman."

Jones Barry gulped and swallowed with the rest.

"I drink," said he. "I can afford it. I'm not afraid of anything Ran. Hammond can do in this affair."

"You're not! Well, mark my words; this girl's for him, and not for you; and better, let me tell you, that he should marry her, and not you. Better for *us* as well as you."

"And why, pray?"

"Why, then, let me tell you. She'd be your master in no time, and she'd rule you with a rod of iron. No more dinners on Sunday, boys. No more wine for good fellows; and, instead of our excellent friend, Jones Barry, presiding where he does—now running a fine horse, now

opening a fine bottle, now jerking at a gander's gullet, and now sitting in a Sultana's lap—"

"Mum, Tom, mum!"

"I say, instead of this, look at the poor fellow, afraid to say his soul's his own! He gives no dinners, boys, for his wife finds no pleasure in our company; he opens no wine, my boys—his wife keeps the keys; he pulls no gander's neck, since his wife makes him tender-hearted by pulling his; and, instead of sitting, now and then, in the lap of a pretty woman at the circus, drinking apple-toddy, he hates the very sight of a pretty woman, as it tells him that, instead of a mistress, he has got a master. No, no, boys! I say the fair Geraldine to Ran. Hammond; he can tame her; and if our friend Jones must have a wife, let her be the fat, laughing girl, that serves the bar at old Hiram Davy's corner; who sweetens the toddy with her smiles instead of sugar; and when she says, 'Is it to your liking, sir?' makes it go down like a blessing. She's the girl, boys, for Jones Barry; and I drink the health of Susannah Davy, and may good fellow never get a smaller armful!"

"Armful, you snake in the grass! Why she's a houseful; she weighs three hundred if she weighs a pennyweight."

"Three hundred! Jones, that's a scandal. I was at the last weighing; two hundred and forty-five, and the stillyard on a perfect level—not a grain more. You couldn't get a better wife, if happiness is what you aim at."

All these sallies produced their appropriate merri-ment. But we need not pursue our good fellows through their midnight orgies. Enough that Tom Nettles floored his host, and, after seeing him solemnly laid out on the rug before the fireplace, he coolly took possession of Barry's own couch, which the latter did not seem greatly to affect. The rest of the company, towards the small hours of the morning, were similarly disposed of.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BIRTHDAY FETE.

THE decision of Miles Henderson was precisely that of Jones Barry. He had prepared himself, under the special instructions of Mrs. Foster, to make his proposals to the fair Geraldine, on the occasion of her birthday. That excellent lady, the step-mother, had several private conferences with this favored suitor, without the knowledge of the young lady. In these conversations, she particularly encouraged his hopes, and enjoined upon him the experiment during the progress of the festivities. She did not tell him upon what she had based her calculations of success, probably with some just apprehensions in regard to his prudence; but she might have trusted him; for, in all his revelations to his companions over the bottle, he never yielded up his secrets entirely. He still kept something to himself, following the counsel of Burns—which even Tom Nettles, who wormed a good deal out of him without seeming to design it, could never succeed in extracting from his tongue. It is probable that the calculations of Mrs. Foster were not remarkable for their profundity; yet they might have been sufficient, for all that, for the purpose she had in contemplation. She probably designed nothing more than so to vex the capricious pride and impulse of Geraldine, with respect to Hammond, as to make her disgust him by her eccentricities; and the scheme was a good one, so far as it was founded upon a pretty correct knowledge of the character of both persons. But the *affaires de cœur* of young people are so much influenced by chance and circumstance—some would say Providence—that the nicest calculations of cunning

are apt to fail at the moment of exigency ; and, with some knowledge of this danger from casualties, our excellent step-mother was more than usually careful in devising the events as well as the picnic and the supper. How she did this, or tried to do it, it is not exactly necessary that we should show ; and we must not anticipate actual events by speculating upon their features and family likenesses while they are yet in the womb of the future. Enough that all parties had completed their arrangements for the birthday, which at length dawned to the awakening of many and conflicting anxieties.

The sun smiled brightly and beautifully that morning, without a cloud ; and, as the purpose of the ladies at the "Lodge" was to make "a day of it," the company began to appear right early. They came from a considerable distance, Mrs. Foster having been at pains to invite the most remote acquaintances, in order that the display should not be thrown away upon few and inferior judges. Her preparations had been conceived on a scale which, however rustic, was unusually liberal for that region of country. Supplies, as we have seen, had been pouring in for some time previous. A number of violins, clarionets, and tambourines had been employed, and a volunteer drummer made his unexpected appearance with the rest, assuming that no musical noises were objectionable at a *charivari*. In one sense, it was a *charivari* that was in progress ; but our opinion is, though no censure was passed upon his conduct, that the drummer was decidedly guilty of presumption. As if troubled with some suspicions of the same sort, he modestly withdrew his performances to a distance, and only within earshot of the house. Here, upon a small mound, which had probably been an Indian tabernacle, and which was surrounded with a clump of pines, he threshed away with his merry sticks to the delight of those who, in carriage or buggy, were passing up the avenue. The horses danced with delight as they heard the inspiring clamor, and the attempts to run away

only gave more life to the proceedings. The drum became, in a little time, too useful for dismissal.

Mrs. Hammond arrived at an early hour. Her son did not then accompany her. He was governed in this delay by motives which we may conjecture from what we have heard him say, on a previous occasion, to his friend Henderson. It was his policy not to seem too anxious. His mother's motive for coming early was that she might not stay late. She did not come seeking amusement, and she designed returning home before the day was out. It was in compliment to the lady, who might yet be her son's wife, that she came at all. She was received respectfully by Geraldine, and civilly enough by Mrs. Foster. The latter was too greatly in her glory not to seem amiable that day. Her vanity was in full exercise, to enable her to play her part with suavity and grace.

Of course, we cannot pretend to describe the persons present. They were very numerous, not less than two hundred and fifty having been invited. All, certainly, did not attend; but there were some who came without being conscious of the necessity of being asked; and these were usually the most conspicuous and active in their attentions to themselves and one another. Our amiable friend Miles Henderson, and our humorous friend Jones Barry, arrived at the same moment; the latter accompanied by his Mephistopheles, Tom Nettles. It was with a slight shade upon her brow that Geraldine observed that Henderson came alone. She had looked, as a matter of course, that Hammond would accompany Henderson. Her mother saw the expression in her countenance, and remarked, in an under tone, as Miles rode up—

"So, his friend's not with him. I doubt if he comes at all. His pride would scarcely allow him to do anything which seemed to do us honor."

"But his mother's here," whispered Geraldine.

"To spy out the poverty of the land, and to go home and sneer. We haven't such a display of plate as the

Hammonds can set out; and she will have her say about the difference between old times, when she was everybody, and now when other people want to be somebody."

"Mother, you are too harsh!"

"Too harsh! Well, you can make up for it by being too tender! We'll see yet if the soft heart of the woman proves too weak for the arrogant pride of the man."

The daughter felt the imputation, and turned away with an expressive smile upon her lips. The mother knew the meaning and the value of that smile, and she was satisfied. Pride was the weakness of Geraldine; and upon this characteristic the cunning woman played. She knew that while she kept this feeling sore and irritable, her schemes were in no danger; and she knew enough of Hammond's character, and suspected enough of his policy, to believe that he would be more likely to increase this irritability of her daughter's mood than to soothe or overcome it. We shall see whose politics were the wisest.

The greater portion of the company having arrived, the grounds began to be filled with groups, detaching themselves from the mass, each for the gratification of his or her peculiar sympathies. Some of the younger damsels might be seen swinging or skipping rope under the shade-trees, with a fair sprinkling of dapper young lads to devour, with greedy looks of love, their several movements and devices. Here and there, along the avenue, might be seen a whizzing ball, in the hurling of which the youngsters were the performers, and the ladies were lookers on; while tables, spread conveniently, offered cakes and lemonade as refreshments to the languid and exhausted. But anon, the drum gave the gratuitous signal, and the clarionet and violin led the way for a procession. The swing and rope were abandoned in a moment, the ball received its last cast. The youth of both sexes came together, and paired off, by a very natural movement, which showed how sympathetic

were the instincts of both parties; and away they march in a procession which led through a beautiful avenue of oaks and cedars. It was at this moment, and while our young friend Jones Barry, being plucked by the sleeve by Mrs. Foster, was breaking away from the society of Tom Nettles, and rushing forward to offer his arm to Geraldine, that Randall Hammond was seen suddenly to glide from under a clump of shade-trees, near the avenue, and anticipate his intentions. Geraldine certainly did not, in her countenance, reflect the spite which was apparent in the visage of the mother, at this moment, to Tom Nettles, who muttered to himself with that sort of grin and chuckle which the man of mischief puts on when he sees sport.

"It sticks, old lady, does it? and so it should. Ran. Hammond is the lad to conquer both of you."

His sneer and feeling did not prevent him from playing the gallant with the very lady whose vexation had so much pleased him. While the anger was yet quivering on her lip, he drew nigh, and with the sweetest smile in the world, and the nicest compliment, he tendered her his arm; which, as he was a most comely person and a moderately young bachelor, the judicious lady at once frankly accepted.

"Really," said he, "Mrs. Foster, you are in every respect fortunate. The day is just the day for such a *fête*, and it is no discredit to the company to say that it is worthy of your arrangements. I need not say that they are worthy of any company."

"Oh, Mr. Nettles, you overwhelm while you delight me!"

"True in every respect, my dear madam. I never saw so excellent and large a collection of fine people before in the county. I could scarcely have thought, indeed, that the county could boast of so many fashionable-looking people."

"Nor does it, Mr. Nettles!" answered the lady, with a delighted smile. "In some instances, I have gone out of the county for my guests."

"That explains it," said he, quietly, as if assured

and satisfied. "Miss Foster," he continued, "is a beautiful creature. *They* would make a noble couple."

The motion of his hand was in the direction of Geraldine and Hammond, who were just wheeling out of sight in a turn of the avenue. The remark, which he well knew was wormwood to his hearer, remained unanswered. Nettles was a man to dash his bitter usually with some sweet; though, perhaps, the bitter was apt, finally, to preponderate.

"But it is the misfortune of young persons, who have no guardians sufficiently their seniors to command their veneration, to be perverse in such matters. I should fear that Miss Foster is too decidedly your companion to be sensible of your authority."

"There is some truth in what you say, Mr. Nettles, though, as her proper guardian, I ought not to confess it. But, the fact is that, when I yielded to the entreaties of Mr. Foster, I was but a child myself."

The words passed through the brain, but did not find their way to the tongue of Nettles: "Pretty well grown, and honestly twenty-eight, if old grandmother Crowell knew anything about it." He did not suffer any pause for reflection, as he answered—

"The county proverb is a true one, I'm afraid, Mrs. Foster."

"What proverb, Mr. Nettles?"

"That which says that the mothers are only the elder sisters of the daughters, and that the widows are always in the way of the virgins!"

"But you don't believe it, Mr. Nettles?"

"At this moment, I have every reason to do so;" and the grateful lady was not unconscious of the slight contracting pressure upon her own of the arm in which it rested. The thought irresistibly forced itself upon her—

"How strange that Mr. Nettles shouldn't have thought of a wife. Certainly, it's high time for him to do so, if he ever means to get one."

Nettles was a famous mocker, but we must follow the

company rather than the conversation. The procession continued through most delightful groves, all the way to the mill-seat of Gushlynn. On the route, the young people sported like so many kids. Conspicuous among these was Jones Barry; who, playing his antics directly in the sight of Geraldine Foster, might, if he had been sufficiently observant and sagacious, have seen upon her countenance a scorn quite as expressive as that with which Michal saluted David when she saw him dancing along the highways. Geraldine, in respect of pride, was no bad representative of Saul's daughter. Barry was the centre of a bevy of fat girls, whose dimensions somewhat reminded him of the barkeeper's daughter, whom Nettles had counselled him to choose for a wife. It was evident that he was not less a favorite among them, because he consented to play antics in their sight. He might have had his choice among them, without leaving the rejected any better satisfied, or worse off. Miles Henderson revolved near Geraldine, but as an escort to one of the Baileys, a quiet, dignified girl, one of the three or four whom Mrs. Hammond was not unwilling that her son should espouse. The procession passed forward, the music still vibrated along the groves, and soon the groups began to arrive at the beautiful place chosen for the picnic, the fine park of open pines which spread along at the foot of the falling waters of Gushlynn. This was an abandoned mill-seat, the great dam and floodgate of which were still maintained in repair; the former being a broad carriage-track, overgrown on each side and perfectly shaded by great evergreens, the water-oak, the cedar, and several other trees; while the floodgate afforded a pretty and picturesque fall of water, whose torrents were always making a pleasant murmur for the groves. Above the dam lay an immense sheet of several thousand acres, several feet deep, of water; while below, the falling surplus found its way, after passing the wreck of the old mill-house, into a sweet little lake, which was sufficiently deep for midsummer bathing. This too was surrounded by an ample shade of evergreens,

and the *tout ensemble* presented one of those lovely pictures of united elevation, water, and shade-tree which, after all, present the most durable materials for the landscape painter. Here then, along the mill-dam, in the shade of the pine woods below, and at intervals around the *reserve* and the lakelet of discharged waters, our company dispersed themselves, each after his own fashion seeking pleasure. Here again the swing was found, as well of rope as of great grape-vines on which the young damsels reclined, and in which they were rocked occasionally by the eager hands of the dutiful young men. Here, too, the ball was again put in requisition among the more athletic, who darted through the wide green avenues in graceful flight, or hurried in pursuit, with good-natured fury. Some of the young ladies did not scorn to engage in the play, though it was observed that all who did so had previously taken the precaution of wearing short frocks and ample pantalettes. These nice little appendages of the petticoats, it was perhaps censoriously remarked by some of the elder maidens, were worn quite gratuitously by several who in no other way could be suspected of being still in miniature girlhood. But this matter does not concern us. It may be well, however, to state that Geraldine, whatever might have been the imputations upon her eccentricity, was not seen to participate in any of these wilder exercises, though her excellent step-mother frequently urged it upon her, and stoutly seconded the entreaties of our friend Barry, who challenged her to a match at rope-skipping. That the eye of Hammond and his mother were both upon her, all the while, with some curiosity, did not discourage Mrs. Foster from her object. On the contrary, somewhat stimulated by seeing that they watched the daughter, she was more than ever anxious to persuade her to the exhibitions of the hoyden. We have already some knowledge of her policy. It did not succeed in this instance, even though, stung by refusal, she said bitterly, as she turned away from the girl:

“Well, you are perhaps right. I see that the Queen

of Sheba, and her wise Solomon, are both watching you. They would never countenance, I suppose, any such innocent practices."

The high-spirited girl was half tempted to whirl away upon the rope, or to seize, and wing, and pursue the ball, as she heard this imputation upon her courage, but she too had her reflections, and prudently forbore. Indeed, she now began to feel, not only that she had something at stake, but that her step-mother was neither the most wise nor the most disinterested of counsellors. Barry, sustained by her guardian, she began to feel was something of a bore; and she was conscious of a purpose, which she now perforce maintained, which would sufficiently try the sense of propriety as well in Hammond as his mother. But of this hereafter. It is certain that she refused to do the *graces* on the skipping-rope, or the *fairies* in pursuit of the flying ball. She conducted herself with a demureness which, while it vexed her mother, was quite satisfactory to other parties; and Mrs. Hammond returned home, at an early hour in the day, much better reconciled to the object of her son's admiration than she was before she came.

Meanwhile, the business of the day proceeded with pleasure, as it had begun. Dinner was spread under the shade of the great trees; a well-considered repast, in which the provision was ample, and in good taste. In this matter, Mrs. Foster received no small assistance from her daughter, who had brought to her knowledge the refinements of the ancient and elegant city of Savannah. When one of the plain country ladies of the past generation beheld, for the first time, a display of silver forks, and silver fish and butter-knives, she exclaimed, with looks of genuine apprehension, "I reckon the widow must have *broke* Savannah!"

The fruits of the West Indies had been brought to grace the repast. There were oranges and lemons, plantains and bananas, pineapples and cocoanuts. There were preserved fruits and foreign cordials, and a very generous supply of champagne; a beverage which most

effectually entrapped, to their overthrow, sundry persons who had never drank any beverage of similar flavor more grateful than "persimmon beer." Our friend, Jones Barry, through the agency of Mrs. Foster, was a conspicuous person in the order of the exercises. He was rather a volunteer, when the champagne-corks were to be sprung, his whole soul being surrendered to the happiness of seeing the young ladies start with surprise at a sound which was so unwonted from such a source. We must add that his practice was scarcely so innocent when he busied himself in decoying the same simple damsels to such free draughts of the liquor as rendered them scarcely less ridiculous than himself. That mischievous creature, Tom Nettles, was busy, however, in playing upon Barry the same game which he played upon the girls, and he watched with no little pleasure the uncertain strides which the latter took among the several groups which he haunted, while his voice equally increased in thickness and rapidity. These ludicrous proceedings, however, were about to undergo a change. There is scarcely any human pleasure, as we know, which can be considered certain for three hours together. Our hero, Barry, in the midst of his merriment, suddenly remembered that he had a serious business before him; a look and a whisper from Mrs. Foster drew his attention to Geraldine, who had wandered off with Miles Henderson to the ancient mill-site, and was now to be seen at the extremity of one of the remaining beams or sleepers. The torrent ran at considerable depth below. Beside her, stood Miles Henderson. He seemed about to leave her; and, with the words, "Now's your time," Mrs. Foster left Barry to pursue his purpose.

Barry, who was a creature of simple impulses, immediately started away, and, in his passage up the mill-dam, met Miles Henderson returning alone. Poor Miles had given in his petition, but without waiting or seeking for a present answer. He only implored that Miss Foster would read his billet at the first opportu-

nity, and communicate her reply as soon as possible. He muttered something about anxiety and suspense ; but he was rather unintelligible to himself, and he could not trust himself to be more explicit. He was crossing the mill-bank quietly, without seeking to attract attention, and was just about to descend to the plain, when Barry appeared below. The latter, however, perceiving the object whom he was pursuing to be still lingering at the end of the great sleeper which crossed the chasm, one end resting upon the bank and the other upon the opposite foundations of the mill-house, proceeded to take the shortest route for reaching her, and, instead of keeping the bank, he darted aside, and was in a few moments seen upon the sleeper. The height was a dizzy one, and so was the head of the daring suitor. Miss Foster, seeing his approach, hastily thrust the note of Henderson into her bosom. At this moment, and when he was half way across the passage, he began to fumble in his own bosom, and before he or anybody could conjecture his peril, he toppled suddenly, lost his balance, and went over, kicking and floundering with ineffectual struggles, into the boiling waters below. Fortunately, they were deep enough to break his fall, which was some twelve or fifteen feet, and he disappeared, headforemost, in the petty gulf. Geraldine screamed aloud, for she saw the accident instantly, and the scream was echoed by a dozen other pretty damsels on the opposite side. It required but a few moments to make the event known among the crowd, and twenty seconds had not elapsed before Tom Nettles and Randall Hammond had made their way to the edge of the lake, where Barry was now struggling with very ineffectual efforts, his wine being diluted, seemingly, to the entire defeat of his energies, by the disproportionate quantity of the inferior liquid which he had swallowed after it perforce. A couple of long-pointed poles happened to be convenient, and were seized in the same instant by Hammond and Nettles. With these they fished the poor fellow up by his clothes, to the bank, the mischievous Nettles contriving, more than once,

by seemingly awkward movements, to thrust him down into the lake just when he expected to be out of it. It was in vain that Hammond honestly labored to get the gallant upon his legs. It happened, unfortunately for Barry, that his head lay nearest to Nettles; and the wilful agitation of the latter, with his pole thrust into the breast of Barry's coat, succeeded in giving him several severe dips before he was finally extricated.

"Whoo! Tom! What the devil, man! would you drown me in a mill-pond?"

"No, Jones, my dear fellow; but I'm quite nervous at your situation—quite."

And, as he spoke, the head of the unfortunate took another plunge, at the very moment when Hammond was drawing him ashore by the leg. He came forth looking aghast, shook himself like a water-dog, and it was then seen, for the first time, that he held a letter clasped in his hand.

"Why, Jones, what have you got there?" demanded Nettles.

"A letter!" and, with the words, he cast his eye up to the head of the mill-seat, as if still looking for Geraldine. But she was no longer in sight.

"A letter! Where the deuce did you get it?—at the bottom of the lake?"

"Don't ask me, old fellow. I'm no better than a heathen icicle. I'm chilled to the heart. Get me into the bushes, and bring me a bottle of champagne."

"A good brandy-toddy would be better," said the other, while he hurried off. Hammond then conducted him into the woods, while he summoned his servant to go off for fresh clothing.

"Won't you go home yourself, Barry?" demanded Nettles, when he returned, having first administered his drink.

"No; I feel better now. I shall be dry soon. Here, Tony—[to the boy in waiting]—kindle up a fire, and let me know what the natural feeling of dry breeches is. What a d——d affair it is!"

"Dreadful!" said Nettles. "But that letter, Jones?"

"Oh! if you must see it, there it is."

Nettles, reading the address—

"To Miss Geraldine Foster," &c.

At these words, Hammond disappeared, leaving the two friends together. It was night when they showed themselves again, Barry looking as happy as if nothing had happened, and ready for all the grateful intricacies of the Virginny reel.

CHAPTER XV.

THE EVENING OF THE DAY.

MRS. FOSTER was greatly discomfited at the disaster of her favorite. She contrived, however, to keep her countenance ; an effort of which her daughter was not capable. She, as well as most of the young damsels, as soon as it was discovered that Barry was in no danger, laughed outright at his predicament, and were extremely amused and interested at the way in which he was fished out of the pond; the particular part taken by Nettles in this delicate operation being very intelligible to most of them. His disappearance in the bushes was followed by a movement of the whole party. The day had passed with great satisfaction to most of the company, and even this accident did not materially abate the general satisfaction. The dinner was excellent ; the eates, wands, the wines and dessert, in especial, were equally new and grateful to the popular palate ; and it was with heightened feelings of enjoyment, and heightened expectations also, that the guests listened to the signal of the drum, which announced the return to the homestead. With flying colors and triumphant music, the gay cavalcade moved forward ; but in order very different from that in which they came. There was now more life and impulse, and less formality. People are more at home usually after the wine and walnuts ; and the chatter was incessant, the laughter wild, and not a few pranks and petty excesses were practised on the return route among the younger people. Hammond did not now escort Miss Foster. He left that pleasant duty to other gallants, of whom the fair damsel had a liberal supply. Henderson also kept aloof, feeling quite too anxious and too

much interested in the result of his application to risk himself near the person who held his fate in her hands. The return of the party was happily timed to bring them into the grounds about the "Lodge," just about dusk. A fairy scene greeted the eyes of the guests as they now drew nigh. A hundred altars seemed to flame, at intervals, among the trees and along the great avenue. Here rude elevations had been made of clay and sand, upon which piles of dry combustible pine had been accumulated, and which were now all blazing brightly, in sharp, upward-darting tongues of fire. The rich illumination lighted up the scene less softly and brightly, indeed, but even more picturesquely than the moonshine; and the happy groups wandered through various pathways over which the blazing brands cast a rich, red lustre, that eminently enlivened the rude forests, and made the particular trees stand forth, each like a frowning giant. The admiration of the company was unanimous, and Mrs. Foster exulted in a triumph which she did not inform any of her guests was due wholly to the fancy of her step-daughter. For that matter, the entire scheme of the day belonged to the latter. All that was fanciful and picturesque in the design originated in her taste and invention. Tea was served, as the party wandered among the trees in the park. The tables which had borne lemonade and cakes in the morning, were now covered with hissing urns and fairy-like cups of china; and here the pledges for partners were given for the dances which were to follow. After the pleasant fashion of the peasants in the south of Europe, gay squadrons prepared to dance under the shade-trees, and by the light of the pine-blazing altars. Others, more considerate of domestic forms and health, prepared to occupy the great hall, the parlor, and piazza of the dwelling-house. The music was already in full discourse, and the groups whirling in the dance, when Nettles and Barry made their appearance. The latter had been fortunate, taxing the full speed of his horse "Glaucus;" the "Fair Geraldine" being in too great esteem to be

used for common purposes, in getting from home a fresh supply of snugly-fitting garments. His long-tailed blue, and shining gold buttons, made a conspicuous figure in the assembly, particularly when contrasted with his pantaloons, of the most delicate velvet buff. Mrs. Foster saw his return with delight. The good lady had begun to be apprehensive of the game. She was afraid that the ridiculous attitude in which he had been placed, his somerset from the sleeper into the lake, and the unhappy floundering which followed there, had disgusted her daughter. She was also by no means a satisfied spectator of the frequent, though brief and broken sketches of conversation which had taken place between Geraldine and Hammond. The reappearance of Barry, restored in appearance, and looking rather attractive, was refreshing. She drew him privately into an inner room, and, while she served him with a dish of tea from her own hands, she could not forbear breaking forth with—

“Really, Barry, how could you make yourself so ridiculous?”

“Ridiculous!” he exclaimed, sipping the beverage; “I ridiculous, ma’am?”

“Such a ridiculous situation, I mean!”

“Perilous, you mean?”

“Yes! it was perilous. But how did you come to fall? What carried you out on that sleeper?”

“I reckon the champagne had something to do with it; champagne and love together.”

“Love?”

“To be sure! What else? Wasn’t Miss Geraldine at one end of the log, and alone? Didn’t you give me the hint, and wasn’t this the letter?”

Here he showed the luckless epistle, which, full of fiery virtue, might be supposed to have been well tempered by its subsequent saturation, like a hissing blade of Damascus in the sacred waters of the Baraddee. Mrs. Foster seized the neatly-folded epistle in her hands.

“Give it to me! I will deliver it myself, this very

night. Meanwhile, do you go out and make yourself agreeable with the young ladies. Don't be too particular with Geraldine. Only let her see you, and see that you can make yourself agreeable to others. Dance with that Miss Berrie ; flirt as much as you can with Miss Dooly. Either of them would be glad to snap you up. Let her see that ! There's several others, Miss Higbee, Ellen Mairs, and Sophronia Ricketts, all of whom will be glad to have you 'squire them. Only don't be rash, don't venture any strange thing, and all will go right. I'll deliver the letter !"

"Well ! I thank you very much, for I was beginning to feel quite squeamish about it. I'm a little afeard that Hammond's getting on rather fast !"

"He ! never fear. He has dropped too many stitches for him to take up in a hurry. Will you have some more tea ?"

"I shouldn't care if I had something stronger."

"Oh ! you mustn't think of any such thing now. I can give you stronger *tea*."

"Well ; if there's nothing better."

"Taste that," said the hostess, spooning him from a cup which the servant handed ; and the scene was a good one for the painter. Barry, like an overgrown boy, sitting back in his chair, while the fair widow—by no means old or uncomely—cup and saucer in one hand, and spoon in the other, fed him with the smoking beverage.

"Prime !" said he, with an air of satisfaction. Then taking the cup, he dashed it off with something less of appetite than resolution ; and, abruptly darting from the chamber, hurried out to seek a partner. Mrs. Foster followed him with eager interest, and was at length pleased to see him sprightly whirling it with the bouncing Rebecca Floyd. It was with no dissatisfaction that she beheld Miles Henderson dancing with Geraldine. It was somewhat strange that she entertained no such fears of this young man as of his friend. He was quite a worthy and a very *lovable* person ; tall,

graceful, good-looking, very amiable, and tolerably well off in point of fortune. But, somehow, these qualifications never occasioned a fear; though they were in all respects, but that of fortune, very far superior to any of the possessions of her favorite. She kept the couple in sight till the dance was over; and then hurriedly summoned Geraldine, in a whisper, to the inner room, but not before Hammond had succeeded in engaging her for the country dance that followed; the silly and highly objectionable custom of securing partners for many dances ahead, not then prevailing as it does now—certainly not “in these diggings.” When the two were safely together in the snug little apartment, where Barry but a little while before had sipped his tea, Mrs. Foster, with a very triumphant air, thrust the letter of that worthy into the hands of the young lady.

“There! There’s something for you.”

“What’s this?”

“An offer!”

“Indeed! Here’s a pair of them, then, I suppose,” said the maiden, somewhat coolly, as, for the first time, she took from her bosom the billet of our friend, Henderson. “First come, first served,” and she proceeded to break the seal of the latter.

“Who’s that from?” asked the step-mother, with some anxiety.

“Miles Henderson. He gave it me at the mill.”

“Oh, well!” and the good lady seemed relieved as the daughter proceeded in its perusal. This done, she laid it quietly on the table; Mrs. Foster taking it up and going over it as soon as she had laid it down. The perusal of Jones Barry’s declaration followed, on the part of the person to whom it was addressed, and Mrs. Foster watched Geraldine’s countenance with increasing curiosity, while pretending to examine Henderson’s letter. But she gathered nothing from the face of our heroine. She read the one epistle, as she had done the other, with a singular calm, amounting to indifference;

and, handing it to the mother, begged her to take care of both.

"But what will you say? What are you going to do? You accept?"

"There's no hurry! I'm not in the humor now to think of these things. The gentlemen deserve that I should think of their offers respectfully."

"Oh, certainly! But Barry?"

"Mr. Jones Barry must learn to wait as well as his neighbor," was the quiet reply; and at that moment Geraldine was relieved from further questioning by the entry of Miss Betsy Graystock, who bounced in to say that Mr. Randall Hammond was looking for his partner, the country dances being about to begin. It was with some chagrin that Mrs. Foster saw the promptness with which her *protégé* hurried out after this notice; and her disquiet increased as she watched the couple through all the mazes of the dance that followed. It was her endeavor to keep these parties continually in sight, while they remained together; but this was not altogether possible, consistently with her cares and duties as hostess. Her attention was finally called off to some domestic arrangements; and, while she was engaged in the inner room, the dance ceased. Returning to look after her charge, as soon as the confusion of shifting groups could possibly allow, she was a little displeased and distressed to find that they were now nowhere in sight. It was not her policy to afford to Hammond—whose influence over Geraldine she really began to apprehend—any unnecessary opportunities; and, seizing Barry by the arm, she sent him off, with a whisper, to look for Geraldine in one direction, while she set off herself, in another, to detect the whereabouts of her supposed companion.

Hammond, meanwhile, had readily persuaded Geraldine to a promenade under the shade-trees along the avenue. They were not alone in this measure. The gay groups, most of them, after dancing, had taken a similar direction; and, as the night was pleasant, they

might be seen straying away through the various groves, glimpsing here and there through the prolonged vistas, their white garments gleaming spiritually under the flickering lights from the numerous blazing pyres of pine wood, which the watchful care of the negroes in attendance from time to time supplied with fuel. The search of Barry and Mrs. Foster was not an easy one, to examine these various groups and trace out the particular couple among the scattered flocks that wound about capriciously in every turning of the wood. It was still more difficult, when the object of Hammond—perhaps not unobserved by his companion—was temporary secrecy and seclusion. He led her away from all other sets, and, in the doubtful light of a half-decaying pile, and under the friendly shadows of a venerable oak which had lived long enough to know how to keep secrets, and was probably too deaf to hear, our hero made his declaration. He spoke in warm and touching language, evidently with a full and feeling heart, but still in accents of a firm and dignified character. The imperfect light did not suffer him to perceive the emotion which his proposals occasioned on the cheeks of the damsel; but he felt her hand tremble in his, and her reply was slow. For some moments, indeed, a profound silence followed his speech, and his heart began to sink with a feeling of dread and disappointment, for which, it must be confessed, he found himself very imperfectly prepared. But, with some abruptness in her manner, as if her reply was the result of a real effort, and was, indeed, foreign to the genuine feeling which was at her heart, she somewhat surprised him by saying—

“I am honored, Mr. Hammond, by your offer, and—”

There was a pause, when she again began—

“You have heard, no doubt, Mr. Hammond, that I am a very thoughtless, a very whimsical, a very capricious, a very eccentric girl, and, in truth, I am so. I have been very foolish, and my foolish resolutions some-

times trouble me, as they do in this instance. But the kind and complimentary declaration which you have made reminds me of one of my own, and I am half ashamed to tell you what it is."

"Indeed! But, dear Miss Foster, you cannot doubt that I will be the most indulgent of all judges—"

"Oh, surely, as far as it is possible; but your declaration makes you an interested one, and my resolve concerns this very declaration."

"Indeed!" with an air of some surprise.

"Yes, indeed!" and there was now some little pique mingled in with the lady's embarrassment; "but it concerns not only your proposals, sir, but those of other persons. You must know, sir, and I do not mention the fact except from the necessity of the case, that yours is the third offer of marriage which I have had to-day."

"Then, Miss Foster, I am to understand that I am too late?" This was said rather proudly.

"Not so, Mr. Hammond. You are, on the contrary, rather quick. I have as yet determined on neither, and a rash resolution—a foolish vow—makes it impossible that I should determine directly. I—I have been very foolish, sir."

The poor girl seemed really very much embarrassed. Her sympathies were all with Hammond; but her pride had been committed, and it was still watchful and resentful. Hammond perceived and felt for her embarrassment.

"If I knew what to say or what to do!" said he. "If I could only conjecture the cause of your embarrassment!"

And he hesitated. The pride of the girl came to her relief.

"I have been very foolish, no doubt; but that is no reason why I should be cowardly. I must risk the reproach of being whimsical and ridiculous; but you shall know all. Mr. Hammond, your horse 'Ferraunt' is, you tell me, the fastest horse in the country?"

Her companion was confounded. This question, seemingly so absurd, was put with all imaginable seriousness; nay, with something like a vehement earnestness, while the speaker looked directly up into the face of the person she addressed, as if anxiously awaiting his answer. He was bewildered.

"Really, Miss Foster, you surprise me. What can the speed of my horse have to do with the matter?"

"A great deal—a great deal. Only tell me, is it not so? Is not 'Ferraunt' the fastest horse in the country? In short, can't he beat Mr. Henderson's 'Sorella,' and the 'Geraldine,' my namesake, of Mr. Barry's?"

"Such is my opinion. Nay, without an accident, I am very sure of it. But really, Miss Foster, you must again permit me to express my surprise at the question."

"Oh, I know that you think me very ridiculous, and I am so—I am so," answered the girl, now laughing playfully and wildly, as if with a heart fully relieved of a burden.

"Forgive me, sir, I am but a child; seventeen only, to-day. Forgive me; but will you spare me to-night? Suffer me to convey to you my answer in writing."

She gave him her hand as she spoke. He seized and conveyed it to his lips, and the action was in noways rebuked. But it was witnessed. Mrs. Foster broke in, at this moment, with "Geraldine, Geraldine! my daughter, you are wanted."

"I am with you, mother;" and she whirled away with the intruder, who had barely time to say, "What do I see, Geraldine?" when Jones Barry came up to entreat the hand of the latter for the next cotillon, and to relieve her from the necessity of answering a very awkward question.

CHAPTER XVI.

THAT LAST DRINK AND DANCE, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

WE must premise that, when dispatched by Mrs. Foster in search of Geraldine, Jones Barry did not proceed directly upon his mission. He was diverted from this object by his friend Tom Nettles, who appeared to have been seeking, and who, seizing him by the arm, drew him to the rear of the building with a look and manner of very mysterious confidence.

"Jones," said he, "champagne is an excellent creature, and so is sherry. I like them very well in their way. But they seem to me, in comparison with our good old Georgia drinks, like the dessert to the solid feast. The nuts are good, the raisins, cakes, and almonds; but, after all, my boy, give me a genuine haunch of venison, a good smoking ham, and a fat turkey, or a pair of ducks. So with these wines. I acknowledge champagne to be a fiery, well-bred gentleman; but he is too uniformly genteel and delicate. I want more solid argument than he can give me, and so I turn, when I can, to a sober whiskey-punch, a brandy cocktail, or a peach or apple toddy."

"But you can't get any of them here," said Barry, eagerly.

"Can't I? Leave Tom Nettles alone for finding out where the weasel sleeps. This fellow Abram, who serves as a sort of major-domo in the widow's household—By the way, Jones, the widow would suit you better than the daughter; she's a better armfull. Don't you think so?"

"She looks well."

"Ay, and would wear well, old fellow."

"She would, indeed."

"Think of it. It's worth a thought."

"It's too late now."

"What! are you engaged to the daughter?"

"I suppose you may say so. It's as good as that. I've handed in the letter."

"P-h-e-w! Don't halloo till you're out of the wood."

"But to the liquor. Abram—"

"Oh, Abram: yes! Well, that Abram's a fellow after one's own heart; and, whether you marry the daughter or the widow, I hope you'll give him to me. Feeling the want of the stronger spirit, I said to him: 'Abram, this is a pleasant fellow, this champagne, to say a word to at coming and at parting, but he don't seem to answer so well through a long visit. Now, haven't you something in the shape of a plain, homely, sensible old Georgia drink, that won't foam, and hiss, and sparkle when you speak to it?' Upon which the fellow whispers to me: 'Old master had a jimmyjohn of mighty fine peach in the garret, and, since he's gone, we never uses it.' 'Abram,' says I, 'your master was a sensible man when alive, and I hope was sensible enough when he died to go to a place of good spirits. God bless him, and us. Abram, my lad, can you get us a look at that jimmyjohn?' "

"Well?" demanded Barry, somewhat eagerly.

"Well! Here it is, and here's Abram, and here's a few fellows like yourself, ready to take a toss at the tankard."

They had now reached an apartment in the basement of the building, where a few rude tables sustained a world of crockery, cups, plates, and glasses, such as had already been used above stairs. On one of these tables stood the ancient demijohn, covered with antique dust and honoring cobwebs. Honey, water, cups, and tumblers were in readiness, and nothing was to be done but drink. Even the beverage—a sufficient quantity—had been mixed in anticipation by the judicious Nettles, and the beaker, that was thrust into Barry's grasp,

glittered to the brim, with equal strength and sweetness. In the taste of the sweet, he did not recognize the potency and excess of the strength, and it was with a royal mind that he now broke away from the group of drinkers to continue his search after Geraldine. We have seen at what moment and under what circumstances he found her. As he left Nettles and his companions, a loud laugh attested the conspiracy.

"He has it," cried Nettles.

"A most mortal shot," said Dick.

"It'll floor him, sure," said Ned.

"'Twould floor a bullock," muttered Peter; and, with these calculations, they all scattered in pursuit of their victim, with a view to watching the results.

Meanwhile, unsuspecting of danger, and with a confidence in himself gradually increasing as the peach began to "blossom" in his veins, Jones Barry led his partner triumphantly to the hall, where the dancers were rapidly assembling from all quarters. The company had begun to thin; the hour was becoming late; the old people had pretty much departed, except those inveterate appetizers who will wait through the tedious rounds of dancing in which they do not share, in order to partake of the supper, in which they never fail to insist upon something more than their share. It is not every day, with these, that Paddy kills his favorite cow, and they make the most of the event when he does. There they sat or stood about the room, waiting anxiously the close of the last cotillon. Meanwhile, the music sounded merrily, and the dancers began to vault and whirl. Jones Barry and Geraldine found themselves confronted by Tom Nettles and Polly Ewbanks—Polly being the most portly of all the fair people assembled—as ignorant of the dance as a horse, and as clumsy as an elephant. But Polly had a rather pretty face, and though she felt doubtful of the sort of display which her legs would make, she was willing to peril them rather than lose the chance of a market for her face. With rosy red cheeks, and a rolling, swim-

ming motion, like a great Dutch galliot in a heavy, swelling sea, Polly went to and fro, very imperfectly steadied by the arm, and hand, and counsels of her partner. "Why the deuce," was the thought of Barry, "did Tom Nettles choose such a woman for his partner, when so many so much more comely and compatible could be had?" But Tom had his reasons. There was mischief in his eye, only perceptible, however, to his comrades, one of whom was in the same set with our couple, while the others were eagerly and anxiously looking on. But Jones Barry had neither the time, nor was he in the mood, to make reflections. The peach began to poach upon the territories of his brain. He leaped high, he vaulted, whirled, wheeled, clapped his hands, and at length seemed about to reach that condition of *extase* in which certain virgins under religious inspiration have attained, by which they can stand upon the air and dance upon nothing, without the aid of any unseemly ornaments about the neck. Geraldine began to be disquieted; but her situation admitted of no ex-trication. She felt its annoyances the more as she beheld, at a little distance, the grave, sedate, and circumspect eye of Randall Hammond fixed upon the proceedings. But the confusion grew. First, there was some little awkwardness in Tom Nettles himself. He wheeled to the right when he should have gone left, and when the figure called him to cross over, he sent his partner into the arena. She was constantly blundering; but this Jones Barry was now becoming too happy to perceive. Though a very fair dancer himself, his errors soon became apparent. Yet he was correcting Nettles all the while.

"Wrong, Tom; to the right about! Now we go! How it blazes! Whoop! She flies! Glorious, Tom; eh?" and he strove, while speaking, to bestow a significant look with those eyes which were momentarily becoming more and more small. Round he went, whirling his partner with him. Round went Tom Nettles, with his nearly round partner, her enormous sides seeming to

sweep and force back, at the same moment, every object of the circle.

"Wrong, Mr. Barry," said Geraldine, as he darted forward with a bound after the leviathan beauty.

"Not a bit of it!" he cried, with a hiccough.

"Here!" said Nettles to Polly Fwbanks.

"There!" he cried, in the next moment.

"Now!" he muttered, as he wheeled her forward.

"Here!" as he whirled her back. Her face was as red as the sun at setting, after a hard day's travel in hot weather. Her breath came and went without leaving her very sure of its coming. Barry grew more and more happy; made all sorts of movements, to all points of the compass; and, at length, while all was buzz, and bustle, and confusion, a terrible concussion was heard. He had come in conflict with Polly, in one of his erratic moments, and the event was precisely such as might be anticipated from the encounter of the earth with the tail of the great comet. It was more than a comet's tail, comparatively speaking, that which overthrew Jones Barry; but down he went, his legs passing completely from under him, and between the uplifted feet of Polly, effecting that catastrophe which the mere jostle with him had not occasioned. Down she went also, in the midst of the ring, which spread out on all sides to make the space which her dimensions rendered necessary, and with a squall that shook the house to its centre. There was no describing the scene—the terror, the screams, the disquiet.

"Back to back!" cried Barry, now fairly drunk, and sending out his legs as well as he could, with their movements somewhat cramped by the pile which the fair Polly still continued to present, as a sort of fortress against all his efforts.

"Help me up, for mercy's sake!" was the imploring entreaty of the fat unfortunate. Nettles tried honestly to do so, but his laughter deprived him of all his strength; and it was left for Randall Hammond; who, at the first signal of tumult, extricated Geraldine from

the ring, to do this friendly office for the confounded maiden, whose hurts and alarm had not made her forgetful and indifferent to the awkward exhibition which she had made, particularly in falling, an event rendered utterly unavoidable from the fact that Barry's feet came between her legs at the moment when she was whirling upon a single pin. The dance broke up in the rarest confusion, Barry being borne out by Nettles, with the assistance of some other of the conspirators; having hurt his head, as it was fabled, with striking against the floor. But the blow came from the "peach" out of that antique "jimmyjohn," which Abram had so unwisely discovered among his old master's treasures. The unfortunate gallant was taken to an outhouse, and snugly put to sleep upon a straw heap; his last intelligible words being: "Back to back! back to back, Miss Polly!"

CHAPTER XVII.

SHOWING THAT, AS REGARDS HORSEFLESH, A WOMAN IS
AS STUBBORN AS A MULE.

THAT night Jones Barry slept at the "Lodge." The excellent hostess, who but too justly suspected his condition, having made the proper inquiries after the departure of her guests, soon ascertained where his treacherous friend, Nettles, had bestowed him, and had him borne to a comfortable chamber. He himself seemed to have been unconscious of the transition. It is the tradition, which Nettles traced up to Abram, that the only words spoken by him, when disturbed for removal, were the same which he had last spoken in the ball-room: "Back to back, Miss Polly." The next day at a late hour, on opening his eyes, he found Abram in waiting. Coffee and toast were brought him in his chamber; for his offences were readily forgiven by his indulgent hostess, and no attentions were withheld. She gave him every opportunity. He came forth at noon, looking very much ashamed of himself, with only a confused recollection of what had taken place. He said not a syllable about the peach-brandy, but the good house-keeper had already extorted a confession from Abram. This she kept to herself; and, in conversing with him about the accident, she generously threw all the blame upon poor Polly Ewbanks.

"She's so monstrous fat, and so mighty clumsy, that I wonder she ever shows herself among young people at all. But how's your head now, Mr. Barry?"

"Prime! 'Twould be better, I think, if I had a little something to settle my stomach. I ate too many sweet things last night."

"Perhaps they put too much honey in your peach!" said the widow, slyly.

"Peach, oh! I do recollect drinking a little with Nettles. By the way, Mrs. Foster, a little of that stuff, it's a fine old liquor, wouldn't be amiss."

"On the principle," retorted the widow, "so well known among you gay young men, that the hair of the dog is always good for the bite."

"Ah!" said the offender, "I'm afraid you know everything, Mrs. Foster. You're quite too knowing; yes, you are."

"We know enough to be indulgent, Mr. Barry. What say you to the peach?"

His assent was not hard to obtain, and while Mrs. Foster compounded the peach toddy with honey, she gave him the gratuitous information that "poor dear Mr. Foster was quite fond of his peach-dram. I made it for him regularly twice a day, Mr. Barry; once about this hour, and once just before he went to bed."

"What a dutiful wife!" was the reflection of Barry, as he heard these words, and followed the graceful movements of the widow. He remembered the words of Nettles: "Not a bad armful, indeed!" His further reflections were arrested by her presentation of the spoon, as she had administered the tea the evening before, but now filled with a very different beverage.

"How's that to your liking?"

"It's the very thing. Ah! you know the way to a man's heart!"

The answer to this compliment was arrested by the sudden entrance of Geraldine.

"You here, Mr. Barry?"

"I'm never anywhere else!" said he, quite gallantly.

"How are you this morning, Miss Geraldine?"

"I should rather ask after your health!" was her quiet but sarcastic answer. "You were in the chapter of accidents yesterday. How's your head?"

"Much better, I thank you! If my heart were only half so well!"

"Your heart! bless me! what's the matter with that?"

"Ah! the pain—"

"A pain in your heart! Does it come and go, Mr. Barry?"

"No! It stays!"

"Then you ought, by all means, to consult a surgeon. There's nothing more dangerous. You may go off in a minute. If you will allow me to advise, I'd set out for Savannah, without a moment's delay. Nay! I'd go to New York, and see the celebrated Doctor Physick."

"No! no! Miss Geraldine, no physic for me. It's not a pain that physic can cure. You, Miss Geraldine, you can do more for me than any doctor."

"I! in what manner?"

Barry looked about him. Mrs. Foster had left the room. He drew his chair a little closer.

"You got a letter from me, yesterday?"

"Last night, sir, yes!"

"Last night, yes."

There was a moment's silence. At length Geraldine, throwing aside the ironical manner which she had been employing, and, without any disquiet in her air, said frankly—

"Mr. Barry, I'm very much obliged to you for the favorable opinion which you have of me." He bowed and smiled. "But," she continued, "I have made a vow that no man shall have my hand unless he wins it."

"Wins it?"

"Yes! Now, sir, you have a beautiful horse which you have done me the honor to call after me. You have said, a thousand times in my presence, that this horse is able to beat any in the county. If this be the case, sir, you are able to win my hand, and I put it upon the speed of your horse to do so."

"I did think, Miss Geraldine, that my filly could outstretch any other horse in the county, but you yourself saw that she was beaten by 'Sorella.'"

"Yes; but you told me that she was barely beaten,

and only in consequence of previous fatigue and your own too great weight as a rider, in comparison with the rider of 'Sorella,' who was a mere boy. Now, I tell you, in the same day when I was honored with your proposals, I received those of Mr. Henderson and Mr. Hammond."

"And what do they say to this?"

"They have not yet been answered. My answer goes to each of them to-day. You will communicate with them. You will arrange with them for the trial of speed, and the day of the contest shall be the day of the wedding."

"Miss Geraldine, permit me to say that you're a most strange young person."

"I am afraid so, Mr. Barry, but I can't help it. I've made this strange resolution, and I can't break it. You're at liberty to enter the field or not, at your pleasure, and that you may freely enjoy this freedom, I beg leave to hand you back this letter."

"Oh! I'll try. I'm not afraid. If Miles Henderson has to ride 'Sorella,' I'll be sure to beat him on 'Geraldine.' I don't know what sort of a horse is that of Ran. Hammond's. They say he's a top-goer, but I'm not afraid. I'm ready. I'll try for it."

"Then, sir, you will see and confer with them. In this paper, you have my conditions, which I had drawn out to send you, not expecting to see you here. Suffer me now to wish you good morning."

"It's most deuced strange!" was the beginning of a soliloquy which the entrance of Mrs. Foster arrested. He immediately proceeded to unfold the answer which he had received; an unnecessary labor, since the amiable widow, from a neighboring closet, had listened to every syllable. He was surprised to see her looking so well pleased, and expressed his astonishment and his apprehensions.

"Fear nothing!" was the consoling assurance of the widow. "This requisition of Geraldine's, in fact, leaves the game entirely in your hands."

"How's that? That beast of a horse 'Sorella' has already beaten 'Geraldine.'"

"You'll be able to walk the course! They'll not run! This fellow, Hammond, is as proud as Lucifer. He will bounce outright at the proposition, as an insult; and if *he* didn't, his mother wouldn't let him run, for she's as proud as the devil's dam. Between 'em, they'll look upon Geraldine as little better than insulting 'em; I've managed that. In fact, I've put her upon the whole scheme; so that, if she really had any preference for either of these men, she might kill off her own chances in your favor."

"It does brighten," said he, "but what of Henderson?"

"He'll do just as Hammond tells him—just as Hammond does. There's no fear of him. Only you take care to say that you *will* run; say so from the beginning, and make your arrangements, and leave the rest to me."

"But when's the day?"

"That's to be left for those to determine who enter for the prize. The marriage is to take place on the evening of the day when the race is decided. In other words, you're to start from a fixed point at a certain hour, on a certain day, the competitors all together, and he who first comes up to the door of the "Lodge" may claim the lady. I am to know the day, and the wedding feast shall be prepared, and the parson shall be in readiness."

"It's a new way of doing business."

"It's the way for you, so see to it; and don't let out to Nettles or anybody what I tell you of my calculations, for then they might come to other resolutions, if it was only to balk us. If they once thought I had anything to do with it, they'd most certainly do so; for then they'd think that Geraldine was directed what to do by me."

We need not linger with these parties. If Jones Barry was confounded by the answer received to *his* proposals, what was the astonishment of Miles Henderson and Hammond? The letter to the former was a

simple but respectful one. It declared the resolution of the lady, and forbore all expression of feeling or opinion. He sallied off with it to Hammond. The latter read it, and mentioned that he had also received an answer to his application, the purport of which was the same. He did not show the letter, however, and it was with a secret pleasure that he remarked a material difference in the style and wording of the two letters. While that to Henderson merely declared her determination, in simple terms, as if written without an effort, showing the writer to be comparatively indifferent to the feelings which she might provoke, that to himself was distinctly apologetic in its tone. While her requisition was precisely the same in both the letters, she was here prepared to show something like a regret that it had been made. "I deem it right to say," was the language in one place, "if only in justice to myself, that it is rather in obedience to a resolution, perhaps rashly made, but which I must still hold inviolate, that I attach so singular a condition and qualification to my assent, particularly where, as in the present instance, the application, as I am well aware, does me so much honor."

This may have been ironically said, but it was more grateful to the self-esteem of Hammond to fancy otherwise: and though vexed and wondering at the absurdity of the requisition, it was somewhat grateful to discover such a decided difference in the language employed in Henderson's letter, and his own. Besides, he recollected with feelings of satisfaction the inquiries which the young lady had made the night previously as to the speed of his horse. All this made it sufficiently apparent to his vanity that she desired his success; and yet the requisition was not the less offensive to all his ideas of propriety.

"To choose her husband according to the legs of his horse!" said Henderson, with praiseworthy indignation.

"It is astonishing! there is some mystery about it," said Hammond.

"To put us on the same footing with that silly creature, Barry!" exclaimed the one.

"The mother is at the bottom of it," responded the other.

"What is to be done?" cried Henderson. "I'll be d——d if I'll run a race to get a wife. If it's in the heels of my horse that she's to find my merits, I shall be at a loss where to look for hers."

"Very well said, Miles, and quite spirited. But, as you say, what's to be done? that's the question. Now, I'll tell you what I think. I propose to go and see Miss Foster in person, and to talk the matter over with her, showing all the absurdities of this requisition, and the ridiculousness of the position into which it will throw all parties. I think she may be persuaded to hear reason, for I am disposed to think that the whole affair originated with the step-mother. What she proposes to effect by it, unless it be merely to astonish the natives—a thing grateful enough to her silly vanity—it is impossible for me to conjecture. Now, without pressing Miss Foster on my own account, I propose simply to argue the matter with her; to show her how it will appear to the public; and endeavor to impress upon her how uncertain will be the securities of domestic happiness where the tie is based upon such conditions. What think you, Miles? Such was my purpose before you came."

"Has your mother heard of it—have you told her?"

"No; and I don't mean to tell her; for I know that she would at once require me to withdraw my proposals. She would never forgive Geraldine for what she would regard as an insult."

"And so do I consider it. But, as you say, she may be led by that woman, her step-mother, who is as mischievous as a young puppy. I don't know but your plan is the right one. You go to her. You can talk with her. I'll ride over to Nettles's during the morning, and meet you here again at dinner."

"Very good," was the reply, and off the parties

posted. To Nettles, Henderson unfolded his troubles ; but that quiz could afford no consolation. The mystery was entirely beyond his solution. He thought the affair comical in high degree, and concluded that the principle once adopted—that of running a race for a wife—would completely revolutionize the concerns of marriage.

“It would certainly discourage me from the attempt to change my condition. I prefer running rigs to running races ; and if I thought ever so much of a woman, I shouldn't thank her for admiring the legs of my horse more than she did my own ;” and, with these words, he extended the favorite limbs—showing a handsomely-turned thigh, calf, and ankle—and stroked them with the complacency of a bachelor whose frequent escapes from the snares of the sex have sufficiently shown his value.

Meanwhile, the eyes of the widow Foster beheld our hero, Randall Hammond, wheel into the avenue and come cantering gently up to the entrance of the “Lodge.” She hurried to the chamber of Geraldine, whom she found already acquainted with the fact. She did not perceive that the countenance of the latter expressed something like trepidation. She was arraying herself for the reception of the guest.

“Well, you'll have to see him,” were the first words of the widow as she broke into the room ; “but what he comes for, unless to make you break your resolution, I can't see. And now, Geraldine, show your firmness ; for no matter what man you marry, if you waver now, you'll never be your own mistress afterwards. He'll rule you without mercy, if you don't. I know something of men. They're all tyrants where you let 'em ; and this man, Randall Hammond, is perhaps by nature one of the greatest despots I ever saw. His mother's educating has made his nature a great deal worse than it would have been by itself. He's too proud, mark me, to run horse or man for you. He's too proud, in other words, to climb the tree for the fruit. It's a

sufficient honor for him to open his mouth and let the ripe grape fall into it. But I wouldn't be so ripe as all that, either. Now, I know that he loves you desperately; and only you hold out, and make no concessions, and he'll have to come to your terms. It'll be a bitter pill for his pride to swallow; but swallow it he will, rather than lose his fruit. All your happiness depends on his being made to see that you are firm. To keep from being imposed upon, a woman has only to show that she won't yield; and it will be as it was with Mohammed and the mountain—if you don't give in to the man, he'll have to give in to you. Mark what I say, my child, and keep to your resolution. Beware of his fine arguments, and have but the one answer: 'It's a vow, Mr. Hammond, it's a vow; and if you truly love me, you'll run off your own legs as well as your horse's, and not find it so difficult or so unpleasant.' Stick to that, and I'll engage all comes out as you wish it. He'd like to have you without any trouble, for that's what his pride requires; but, sooner than lose you, he'll run a foot-race into the bargain, and not stop at a 'hop, skip, and jump.' "

Mrs. Foster was accustomed to rabble on in this manner. But there was a great deal that was artful in her speech, a great deal which she did not believe herself, but which she yet framed adroitly to impress upon the belief of her daughter. Thus, while insisting that it was only the pride of Hammond that would revolt at the conditions which she stipulated, she yet took care to insist that this pride was not sufficiently stubborn to risk the final loss of charms which he so earnestly desired. She had, by this time, discovered that he was Geraldine's favorite, and she felt the danger of suggesting that (as she herself believed) there was every probability of his taking so much offence at the requisition as to withdraw his application for her hand. To stimulate her pride, therefore, without making timid her hope, was the policy of her game; and she had just the requisite cunning to succeed. When the servant

announced Mr. Hammond, with the further intimation that he called to see Miss Foster in particular, Geraldine was armed with certain high notions of feminine prerogative, and was prepared to give his pride a lesson such as would make it tremble with just apprehensions for her love. Not that she felt quite secure in her convictions, but that she felt quite wilful. People frequently are never more apt to be perverse than when they feel that they reason feebly and unjustly, and, working upon childish passions and foolish principles, Mrs. Foster had succeeded in rousing a temper in her *protégé* which made her imperious without making her confident. She was resolute in her purpose as she descended to the parlor, but her heart trembled with strange chills and apprehensions all the while.

The first meeting was one of comparative awkwardness on both sides. But manliness was the particular characteristic of Randall Hammond. He had a duty to perform, and he soon approached it. Having satisfied himself of his course, there was a simple sturdy directness of purpose in his mind that brought him at once to its performance. Gently speaking, and tenderly taking her hand—a proceeding which she did not resent—he spoke in those soft, subdued accents, which are supposed to indicate equally the presence of a warm feeling and of a proper taste.

“My dear Miss Foster, you have proposed a singular condition for us, as that on which your hand is to be obtained.”

“I said and felt that it was so, Mr. Hammond.”

“But surely you are not serious in the requisition? You cannot surely mean to peril your happiness on the heels of a horse?”

“You put it in strange language, sir.”

“But in language the most appropriate, certainly. This surely is the fact. You tell the gentlemen who propose for your hand that there is no choice between them. This, of itself, might well stagger the affections of one whose self-esteem is as active as his passion.”

"But I did not mean anything of the sort, sir."

"Then, permit me to say, the case becomes still more perilous for yourself, if less offensive to the suitor; since, if you have a choice, you wilfully subject it to all the chances of the dice by risking it unnecessarily on the speed of an animal which may fail, of a rider who may fall, of a will which may take offence at so unwonted a requisition, and withdraw from the pursuit even where his affections are most deeply interested."

"It appears to me, Mr. Hammond, you describe a very feeble passion when you speak of such."

"By no means, Miss Foster. The passion may be as warm and active as it should be—the love unquenchable and enduring; but the sense of propriety no less tenacious, and the wholesome laws of principle too stubborn to give way to any impulses of the heart unless they are found justified by virtue."

"Is it possible, Mr. Hammond, that the affections should be warm or devoted where the individual refuses to peril his horse to obtain them?"

"I would peril my life for this hand, my dear Miss Foster, should occasion require it; but have you forgotten that most famous passage in the history of chivalry, when the imperious beauty, conscious of her power upon the heart of a noble knight, threw her glove into the amphitheatre at the moment when an angry lion was stalking over it, and motioned to the brave cavalier to restore it?"

"And he?"

"Obeyed her, braved the lion, recovered the glove, and restored it to the lady."

"Well! Was it not nobly done?"

"Perhaps! In those days such follies had a significance and merit which they do not possess now. But there is a sequel to the story."

"Pray tell it."

"The knight who braved the lion for the lady, from that moment yielded the lady to other knights. He turned away from the reckless beauty who would peril

the life of her lover only to exhibit her power over him ; and the world applauded the desertion, and the beauty was abandoned by all other knights."

The pride of the maid was touched.

"In this fable, Mr. Hammond, I am to behold a warning, I suppose."

"A truth—a principle—is a warning, Miss Foster, to all mankind. In proposing for your hand, I was prepared to let you see into my whole nature—my feelings, opinions, and the principles by which I am governed. I am now dealing with you with the frankness of one who hopes to find a wife in the woman with whom he speaks. I speak with you unaffectedly. I would peril my life for you in the moment of necessity, and joy to do so. I might peril it, as a proud man, at your mere requisition, or your caprice ; but it would be also at the peril of my esteem for you. There is no peril in bestriding a blooded horse, and engaging in the contest you propose ; but it endangers self-respect, it offends public opinion, it degrades the suitor, as it admits no difference—except, perhaps, as a jockey—between him and his competitors, and—"

He paused.

"Go on, sir."

"I almost fear, Miss Foster."

"Nay, sir, you have spoken with little fear, thus far. You may surely finish."

"I will! It is only right that I should show the danger to yourself. It puts the lady in the attitude of one whose standard depends upon her caprice and whims, rather than her principles."

"You speak plainly—certainly without fear."

"My dear Miss Foster, I have perilled all my life in the offer I have made you of my hand. I have everything at stake which is precious. Pardon me, if this consideration makes me bold, where love, alone, would only make me humble. We are both young, but you much younger than myself. You have seen the world only through the medium of other eyes. It is easy

with the young to err, and seeing thus, to see falsely even in the most important interests. I should almost be disposed to think that, in making this requisition, against which I beg most respectfully to protest, you have obeyed any but your own impulses. Let me entreat you to reverse it."

"Really, Mr. Hammond, you attach a singular importance to a horserace."

"Surely, not so much as you, Miss Foster, when you are willing to risk all your own happiness upon it."

"It is your pride, sir."

"It is, but I trust not an improper pride."

"I don't know, sir; but my pride too is concerned. You have been told that I have made a vow. I have said, *to you*, that I felt it to be rash, and feared that it was foolish, but the resolution was taken. I will not now say whether I do or do not regret it. Enough, that it is unchangeable."

"Do not say this, I entreat you, Miss Foster; for my sake! I entreat—But no! To you I may be nothing. For your own sake, then—for your future peace, and happiness, and hope—do not peril everything on a resolution so utterly unmeaning and without obligation. It needs but little effort of wisdom to show that truth, propriety, common sense, all agree to absolve you from such a vow. Beware how you persist! It will be fatal."

He rose as he spoke.

"Do you threaten, Mr. Hammond?"

"Warn! Warn only."

"I thank you for your warning, sir; but I doubt whether it is due more to your notions of principle than to your own feelings of pride, and—"

"My pride, Miss Foster! You do not know or understand me. I spoke not for myself in this matter, but for you. Not with regard to him who should be fortunate enough to secure this hand, but in regard to the happiness of that heart which you will permit me to say, I believe to be more misguided than wilful. The conditions which you couple with this hand will, I fear,

greatly peril that heart, no matter who the suitor it shall win. Am I to understand that you will not, in any circumstances, modify this resolution?"

He took her hand as he spoke. His eyes were fixed upon hers imploringly, with an expression of the deepest interest in her reply. Hers sunk beneath them. The struggle in her heart was great, but the whisper of the evil genius was still in her ears.

"It is his pride that speaks, and you must humble it, if you would not have him your master. He will not give you up. He will yield to your terms, when once he finds that he cannot command his own."

She faltered forth a renewal of her resolution. Then he rose, released her hand, and said—

"I leave you, Miss Foster; of my determination on this subject you will permit me to write hereafter."

He was gone, and she hurried to her chamber and flung herself in a fit of weeping upon her bed. The mother would have consoled her, but in vain.

"You have destroyed me!" was all she said. "He will never come again."

"And if he doesn't," was the elegant response of the mother, "there's as good fish in the river as ever came out of it."

A proverb that certainly fails in respect to the mackerel fishery. We never get half so good a mackerel, nowadays, as was common ten or fifteen years ago, though we pay as good a price for it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW THE RACE WAS RUN, HOW THE RACE WAS WON, AND
WHAT HAPPENED THEREUPON.

"SHE may whistle for it! I'll never marry a woman who chooses me on the score of my mare's legs and bottom."

Such was the elegantly-declared resolution of our now thoroughly indignant Miles Henderson, when Hammond reported how ill he had sped in his mission to Geraldine.

"She certainly pays us no compliment."

"Compliment! She treats us as if one man was just the same to her as another. Who'd marry a woman on such terms? What man who values his happiness at all will take a wife who don't prefer him to all other suitors?"

"Miles?"

"Well, Ran.?"

"Geraldine *does* express this preference."

"How?"

"She knows very well that 'Sorella' can beat Barry's filly. She has done so. Now, it seems to me that this must have been in the recollection of Geraldine when she made the requisition."

"Yes, but 'Ferraunt' can beat 'Sorella.'"

"True, perhaps; but if *you* will engage in the conflict with Barry, I'll decline it. I'll leave the field to you."

"No, no, Ran.; that won't do. I sha'n't run at all. If the lady don't like me sufficiently to answer 'Yes' at once, we're quits. I wouldn't have her now

on any terms. I think she has treated us most outrageously."

"I'm disposed to think her foolish and vexatious mother's at the bottom of it all, though what she proposes to gain by it, I do not exactly see; yet a thought strikes me. It's very clear that Mrs. Foster has all along preferred Barry to either of us. Now, if we withdraw from the field, he walks the course and takes the purse. This, perhaps, will be just the thing that the mother hopes for. That she has blinded Geraldine by some artifice, is very possible. Now, I'm not willing that the mother should be gratified. I'm disposed equally to balk her and to punish Geraldine. I feel something of your indignation; and, though I'm sure she prefers either of us to Jones Barry, yet I fear she presumes upon what she thinks our passion for her, to coerce us with this humiliating condition. She seems to take for granted that we cannot but yield, however little we may relish doing so."

"What's your plan?"

"To accede to her conditions."

"How, accede!"

"Yes, apparently at least. We'll write her to that effect, see Barry, make the arrangements for the race, and get all things in readiness."

"Well!"

"It will be easy to throw Barry out—to beat him after the first mile—and thus defeat the calculations of the mother."

"Well!"

"We agree that the wedding takes place the very day of the race. Let them have the company, let them get the parson, let them make the feast, and let us—"

"Well! well!"

"Ride off as we came, leaving them to eat the supper, and marry as they can."

"Bravo! I like it! It will shame them to the whole country."

"They deserve it! What think you?"

"It's a sentence! They shall pay the forfeit. The idea is capital. It'll be a lesson to such people hereafter."

"Then let us proceed about it. What we do we must do quickly, so that the thing shall not be blown unnecessarily abroad. I shall keep it from my mother if I can; at all events, I must keep from her that I mean to put in for this prize. To do this, I'll go home with you, and we'll write and work from your house. To Barry we must send to-morrow, and have the race early next week."

The arrangements, as devised, were all made. Barry was invited to an interview, and readily came into the arrangements; somewhat disappointed, however, to find so prompt an acceptance of the conditions, in spite of the confident predictions of Mrs. Foster. That good lady was quite as much confounded as anybody else; but she made the best of a bad bargain. She encouraged Barry to hope; and it was with a confident face that she could now say to her daughter—

"You see? 'Tis as I told you—you have only to be firm, and he submits. This is the way with men, always. Women yield too readily. Let them only stick out to the last, and they'll rule in the end."

Meanwhile, the affair got abroad, and was the cause of no little excitement. The subject is one which still, to this day, interests the people of the surrounding country. They call it the "race for a wife." Of course, it was the crowning event in the history of Geraldine Foster's eccentricities. They little knew how small was the share of the poor girl in the proceeding. Nettles was delighted with the affair. Its novelty charmed him. He did not exactly expect that Hammond would have engaged in the contest, for he had quite as high an opinion of that gentleman's pride of character as was entertained by Mrs. Foster; but he said nothing against it. He told Jones Barry, however, that the game was all up with him; that the "Fair

Geraldine" stood no chance against either the heels of "Ferraunt" or "Sorella." "But," he continued, "I shall be glad to see you beat, for reasons I've already given you. This girl is not the girl for you. Better the step-mother, Mrs. Foster. She's neither old nor ugly, and she knows what good living is. Besides, she's a widow, whose gratitude to the man that will take her off her own hands will make her tolerably submissive. But, better still, the fat girl, Susannah, at Hiram Davy's corner. She's the good creature, the sweet laughing armful of happiness, all fat and good-humor. Even Polly Ewbanks, whom you overthrew at the ball, would be more suitable, and, for that matter, she evidently likes you."

"Don't speak of her, the cow! I'll never forgive her for that tumble. She threw me, thrusting her elephant legs between mine, just when I was *cavorting*."

"The boot's on t'other leg, Jones. It was you that thrust your pegs in the wrong direction, and you did the mischief. In truth, Jones, I'm afraid it was more design on your part than accident."

"I swear to you, Tom, I never designed anything; but I'm willing to confess that that 'peach' was quite too much for me, after the sherry and champagne."

"Not a bit of it; but there was a sort of destiny that made you and Polly Ewbanks fall together; and, mark my words, I prophesy that, if ever you marry, it'll be one of the three—Polly Ewbanks, Sukey Davy, or the widow Foster—and I don't care much which; though Sukey or Polly, either, would make you the best wife. It's very certain that if Geraldine Foster is to be got by running only, you stand no chance against 'Ferraunt' and 'Sorella.'"

Mrs. Hammond at length heard of the terms of the conflict, and was shocked at its monstrosities. She at once appealed to her son in the earnest language of a mother, to avoid any such competition. He answered her evasively but satisfactorily, in calm but earnest language.

"Fear nothing, mother; there is no prospect of my ever being united with Miss Foster."

And here the matter rested until the day appointed for the trial. The three competitors had, in their separate answers, agreed upon the terms. They had also—using a discretion which had been conferred upon them—concurred in entreating that the day of the race should be that of the wedding also. The company were accordingly invited, and the Reverend Timothy Bindwell, of the Presbyterian Church, was entreated to be present, and made his appearance in his robes of office at the appointed hour. He was one of those to whom it was always agreeable to bring the young together in the blessed ties of marriage, particularly where the wedding-supper was apt to be good, and the marriage-fee a liberal one. His expectations, on the present occasion, were of superior magnitude. It was observed as an evil sign by Geraldine that Mrs. Hammond, though invited, was not present when the company was assembled. She remarked this to her mother, as something ominous; but the latter had her answer.

"Oh! she no doubt feels as bitter about it as she can. If her pride could have ruled her son in such a matter, he had never consented to the terms."

"I hardly think that he will consent now."

"How! When we have it in black and white, under his hands? But dress, my child"—this conversation took place in Geraldine's chamber—"dress, so as to be quite in readiness. I'll send Rachel up to help you."

"Send no one! I'll ring if I want her."

The mother left the room, and the poor girl, as if with a presentiment of the mortification to which she was destined, sank down listlessly before the window, looking out upon the long avenue up which the competitors were to ascend. How bitter were her reflections at this moment! How she deplored the readiness with which she had given ear to her mother's counsels! and with what warning solemnity did the words and looks of Hammond, in their last interview, when he

came to expostulate, rise to her recollection! She probably would not have been dressed but for the reappearance of Mrs. Foster, who insisted upon her immediate preparations. She assisted her in making her toilet, taking care all the while so to speak as to fortify the pride of the damsel, and excite her spirits through the agency of her vanity. Pale, but—in the language of Mrs. Foster—"beautiful as an angel," the devoted girl was at length prepared for the conflict and the company. Meanwhile, let us look after the several claimants for her hand.

We need not detail the preliminaries, important to the parties, but not so to us, which were duly arranged among themselves. Time, place, distance, the signal for the start, were all agreed upon; and at the proper minute the several competitors, each attended by his friend, appeared upon the ground. Tom Nettles officiated on the part of Jones Barry, who had in fact become a sort of dependent upon the superior judgment of that humorist, and never failed to seek him on every emergency. Henderson and Hammond were attended by two young men, whom it is not important to introduce more especially to our readers. The word was given, and the three steeds leaped off most beautifully together, but had not run a hundred yards before the "Fair Geraldine," as if fearing the loss of her good name in such formidable rivalry, or frightened by some unusual object along the roadside, suddenly bolted into the woods, taking rider through bush and through brier, a formidable chase, which, but for his frequent practice as a fox hunter, would have certainly endangered his neck. When the unfortunate Barry succeeded in reining in his capricious beauty, who seemed disposed to emulate her namesake, he found his competitors clean gone out of sight, and himself hopelessly distanced. He gave up the chase entirely, and, cantering out into the open track, came forth just as Nettles, and the two other bottle-holders, were riding forward to the "Lodge." He joined them, and, putting the best air upon his defeat possible, he

told them how it happened. The two friends of Hammond and Henderson consoled with him like men of proper gallantry; but Nettles openly congratulated him upon the event.

"The hand of fate is in it, Jones. You are destined for Polly Ewbanks, Sukey Davy, or the widow. I'm glad of it. This jade is too high-necked for you, and would have ruined you forever as a good fellow."

Thus talking, they wheeled into the avenue. Meanwhile, let us hurry to the "Lodge," and see how things are working there. Geraldine had not long descended to the parlor, and was in the midst of salutations and congratulations innumerable and inconceivable, when the cry rose from the piazza—"They are coming! They are coming!" This occasioned a rush. The bride was deserted, and with a strange sinking of the heart, she crouched, rather than reclined, on the sofa, leaving it to others to report the conflict, which she no longer had the courage to behold. Mrs. Foster was the first to bounce into the piazza as she heard the cry. Parson Bindwell placed himself along-side of her, and the several groups, according to relationship or intimacy, ranged themselves in near neighborhood. The banisters were thronged, two long benches were filled with crowding forms, and several stood upon chairs dragged for the purpose from the parlor. Poor Geraldine hearkened breathlessly to the murmurs and the cries from without.

"The sorrel has it!" cried one.

"And now the iron gray!" cried another.

"But where's Barry? Where's Barry?" was the impatient inquiry of Madam Foster.

"Distanced!" was the answer from one of the party, "as I always said he would be."

It was evident there were but two horsemen, and these were Hammond and Henderson. The race was evidently a close one. Approaching in front, the spectators could see no inequalities in their speed, and opinion was kept in a constant state of fluctuation as they advanced.

"Now they come! They come with a rush!"

"The sorrel has it!"

"No, 'Ferraunt!'"

"It's hard to say which!"

"They come! They come!"

At these words, Geraldine could bear the suspense no longer. She darted to her feet, rushed to the door-way just in season to behold the two horses, lock and lock, wheel before the entrance; while the riders, waving and kissing their hands to the company, and bowing their heads, darted away at the same speed in the opposite avenue leading up the road, and were lost to sight in a moment.

"What does that mean?" demanded the parson.

"They are off!" said another. "But who won?"

"The iron gray! Hammond was ahead by a neck."

"It was close work; neck and neck, and hard to say which had it till the last moment. Then it was that Ran. Hammond's horse came out a neck ahead."

Such was the verdict, gravely delivered, of those who had most closely watched the conflict. But where were the competitors? Where was he who had triumphed, and to whom the trembling prize was to be awarded? Geraldine did tremble, but it was with a joy which spoke out in her bright eyes, and played in a sweet smile upon her pouting lips. But why did not Hammond appear? What could be the meaning of that reverential bow, that wave of the hand, as the riders continued on their course; and of the long delay which followed? Meanwhile, Barry and Nettles, with their companions, made their appearance. The misfortune of the former was soon explained; and, in her grief and vexation, Mrs. Foster drew him in with her to the well-known little room where he had sipped his tea and toddy at her hands, to reproach him, as well as she could, for his accident and defeat. Here he could not help the reflection forced upon him by Nettles, that there was really something quite lovable in the widow. It was while they sat together that Geraldine rushed into the chamber, her face red, her eyes dilating in anger, her whole appearance that of in-

dignation almost rising into fury. She held a crumpled paper to her mother, which had once been a neatly-folded billet.

"See to what I am brought by your counsel!"

The mother read. The note was from Hammond to Geraldine. It ran thus:—

"Mr. Hammond presumes that curiosity as to the respective speed of his and other horses, alone, prompted the singular requisition of Miss Foster, and that she had no serious design of making such performance the condition of a solemnity so vital to her happiness as that of marriage. Mr. Hammond has done his best to gratify her curiosity, and should be sorry to avail himself of the result to the prejudice of Miss Foster. He accordingly begs leave to release her from any supposed obligations to himself."

"Disgraced! Insulted! Oh that I were a man! That I had a friend! a brother!"

The widow pushed Barry, and, as Geraldine paced the chamber with face averted, she contrived to whisper him. He at once started forwards at the repeated words—

"That I were a man! That I had a brother! an avenger!"

"Give me this hand, Miss Geraldine, and I will be your avenger."

"Will you kill him, kill him?" she demanded, turning quickly.

"Who?"

"Who but Randall Hammond? He has degraded me before all these people. Kill him, and you shall have the hand that he rejects with scorn."

"I'll call him out. I'll shoot him if I can!"

"Do so, sir! do it quickly, and I am yours, yours!"

CHAPTER XIX.

PISTOLS FOR TWO—THE DUEL.

JONES BARRY was greatly elevated by his new commission. His vanity was immediately tickled by being adopted as the champion of the fair. He had heard something of the days and institutions of chivalry, and he felt all over knight-errantish. It was not that he desired to shed blood, for he was, in fact, rather a kind-hearted creature; but to be somebody, and to be moving always conspicuously in some one's eyes, was sufficiently grateful to make him lose sight of all other matters. Full of fight, he hurried at once to Tom Nettles, to whom he laid bare all the particulars of his situation.

"It's d——d strange!" said Nettles; "and yet I don't know. To touch a woman on that point is to run into the quick with a rusty gimlet. I suppose, since you've pledged yourself to the lady, you'll have to challenge; but Ran. Hammond will blow you into splinters. He's a dead shot at a shingle."

"A shingle's not a man; and I can shoot too. The question is, Tom, will you see to this business for me?"

"Oh, certainly!"

"Well, ride over to Hammond this morning, make the arrangements, and, after that, come and give me some practice at the distance."

"Very good. I'll ride round to your house from Hammond's in time for dinner, and we'll make a night of it. It's no time for practice after dinner, so we'll leave that for next morning at sunrise."

This being agreed on, Nettles at once proceeded with the challenge, which was peremptory, to Hammond. It must not be forgotten that the bearer of this letter was

a great admirer of Hammond. Nettles only amused himself with Barry, and did not respect him.

"Why, Nettles!" said Hammond, "how can I go out with this foolish fellow? The thing is ridiculous. He is the laughing-stock of the country. A good-meaning, harmless creature enough, but one whom I should be sorry to think of raising to my level. As a general rule, I have resolved to fight anybody that makes a demand on me, if only to prevent annoyance from persons who are always to be found anxious to make for themselves a capital of courage out of your reluctance. But I should be afraid of the ridicule which would attach to a formal combat with one so utterly silly and ridiculous as Barry."

"Well! there's some danger of that, I confess; but we'll keep the thing as quiet as possible."

"You can't keep it quiet. His vanity will never suffer him to sleep until he succeeds in making everybody know that he is a champion for the lady."

"Some danger of that; but the truth is, Ran., the fellow is resolved on it, and when that's the case he can annoy you quite as effectually, and perhaps make the ridicule much more successful, than it would be if you were to meet him. If you say you won't meet him, why, I shall give up the business; but, in his present temper, he'll only seek somebody else, who will be very apt to follow it up, and vex you into it at last. Now, I have a plan by which to shift the ridicule to the proper shoulders."

He whispered his scheme to Hammond, who heard him with a dubious shake of the head.

"If I am to go out," said he, "I should prefer to do so with a serious resolution. I should never wish to trifle in such matters."

Nettles had his arguments, and, without being convinced, Hammond consented that his decision should be referred to Miles Henderson, whom he made his sense-keeper, as well as friend, on the occasion. The two rode over together to Henderson's, and the whole affair was submitted to him. Hammond, as in duty

bound, put himself in the hands of his friend, and the subtle Nettles found it much more easy to impress the latter than the former with the propriety of his scheme, whatever that may have been. At present, its purport is concealed from us. Henderson, indeed, was greatly tickled with it, and Hammond, still doubting, was compelled to submit.

“It'll be rare sport, Ran. We shall have the laugh to ourselves. Let him get the lady if he can, but, at all events, give him a mighty bad scare. I know Jones well. He's got as soft a heart as anybody in the world, with all his bluster and conceit, and if we don't make him run for it, my name's not Nettles.”

Hammond, it must be confessed, did not altogether relish the cool and philosophical manner with which the other was prepared to consign the lady to the arms of her champion. He still felt a deep sympathy with Geraldine, though she had greatly mortified his pride, and it was only with the conviction that her conduct had been dictated by a total indifference to his claims, that he was reconciled to yielding her up without a farther struggle. His mind was distracted by lurking doubts of this same indifference, and was continually recalling the numerous little instances in her conduct which had encouraged him in the belief that she really had a preference for him; but these impressions he had been compelled to discard, however unwillingly, in the more recent events which we have described. But her beauties were more deeply engraved upon his imagination than he had been willing to believe, and he now listened to her final surrender with a secret sense of pain, of which he was thoroughly ashamed. The plan arranged between Nettles and Henderson for the duel was such as he could not approve of, and he only submitted to it as one accustoms himself, in such cases, to submit to the conclusions of his friends, even where he deems them unwise. It is a matter of punctilio which decides many such affairs, in defiance of the deliberate judgment of nearly all the parties. But upon this head

we need not dilate. Enough that Nettles went off with an acceptance of his challenge. In three days the parties were to meet. Time, place, distance, and all the particulars were fully agreed on between the two seconds, and they proceeded—one of them, at least—to put their principals in training. Barry, not a bad shot before, was practised every day, at frequent periods, until he could snuff a candle.

"You're now as good a shot," said Nettles, "as you need be; you can snuff a candle at ten paces."

"Ain't that famous shooting?"

"Yes; but I've seen Ran. Hammond divide a firefly upon the wing!"

Nettles had his own mode of encouragement, truly, and possessed the art, in high degree, of warming and cooling his patient in the same instant—as in Russia, they tell us, a fellow is taken smoking out of the vapor-bath and rolled over and over in a mountain of snow—and all with the view to reaction. Nettles was never more happy than when he could exercise the nerves of our friend Barry with such pleasant contradictions. As soon as the duel had been determined upon, and the preparations made, Jones Barry proceeded to report progress to the lady whose battle he espoused. Mrs. Foster, we are pleased to state, was now entirely opposed to the affair; but Geraldine's anger continued. She had few words; but these were all vindictive and wrathful. She thanked Barry for his zeal, and renewed the assurance that, with the fall of Hammond, he should have her hand. Nothing was said of his own fall; but, of course, in that event, the hand could be of no use to him. Before the parties separated, Geraldine drew him aside.

"Mr. Barry, I must be present at this meeting."

"You, Miss Geraldine?"

"Yes, I must see it. I must *see* him fall!"

"But how? We have but two friends on each side present."

"I care nothing for your fantastic forms. *I must be*

present. I do not mean to be seen, but to see. You must manage it that I shall be hidden in the neighboring wood. None shall know."

"But, Miss Geraldine—"

"Oh! It's strange, it's unreasonable, it's unnatural. I know all that! But I must and will be there. Tell me, will you arrange it?"

His answer was a compliance, and he kept his word. Concealed in a neighboring copse, Geraldine Foster was present when the duel took place. She had contrived to get away from the "Lodge" without her mother's knowledge. The place of meeting was at a spot, about three miles off from it, well known to the combatants of the neighborhood as "Pistol Quarter." Here, on a pleasant afternoon, not ten days after the equestrian contest for our damsel, the same parties met to decide a more formidable issue. The preliminaries for a duel are usually very much alike in all cases, and they were not departed from in the present instance. Nettles, for once in his life, seemed thoroughly serious. He proceeded to his duties with the air of a man who anticipated the worst. To Barry he said, while placing him—

"You look quite too fierce and vindictive, Barry. I am afraid you have bloody feelings. I trust you will be satisfied with winging him only."

"I am sworn to kill him," was the stern response.

"Then God have mercy on his soul and yours! Should he entertain a like feeling, you will both be at 'Cedar Mount' (the graveyard) before to-morrow night."

Thus saying, he placed his man, and after the lapse of a few seconds, the signal words were given: one—two—three! The sharp fire followed, almost instantaneously. For a moment, both parties appeared erect, but, on a sudden, Hammond was seen to totter and to fall right forward.

"The bullet is through his heart!" was the hurried speech of Nettles to his principal. "To your horse, at once, Jones, and be off as fast as Heaven will let you. It's all over with him."

"Is he dead?—have I killed him?" was the demand of Barry in wild and husky accents.

"You've done that same!"

"Oh! God have mercy! I'm a murderer!"

"Begone!" and with the words he pushed the pale and conscience-stricken wretch from the ground, helped him on his horse, and saw him wheel about and disappear. He fled, looking behind him, with terror and vengeance dogging at his heels.

CHAPTER XX.

THE GHOST OF A BUGGY.

AT this stage of our story, it is just as well that we should suffer our Tennessean to put in.* It is here that he claimed to be priyy himself to the affair; and, though we despair wholly of being able to give his language exactly, and certainly shall not attempt to convey the slightest idea of his tone and manner, yet, as a witness on the stand, we conceive it only right that he should speak to those parts of our narrative which he himself beheld. "Tom hain't forgot," said he, "that when the Ingins in Florida, this Powell, and Wild Cat, and Tiger Tail, and twenty more smart red skins, was playing hide and seek with Uncle Sam's rig'lars, Old Hickory swore a most stupendious oath that Tennessee could find the boys who could clean them out." I reckon I was among the first of the volunteers that turned out when the Gov'nor said we was wanted. I won't tell you how we made out in Florida, for that's pretty much in the books and newspapers a'ready. It's enough to know, as I said before, that the Tennessee boys didn't do better than other people. Fighting we had, and fight we did, whenever there was a chance for it; but, Lord bless your souls, there was no more seeing your inimy till his bullet was in your gizzard, than there was swallowing it afterwards with a good digestion. And when you did see the red skin, it was on a smart gallop, on the other side of some etarnal swamp that you had to cross, belly-deep all the way, before you could get at him; and then you didn't get him no more than the

* See Introductory Narrative.

man who hunted the flea. Well, it was on the 21st day of November, 1836—I keep all the dates in black and white—that we were ordered to push for the inimy into the Wapoo Swamp. We had had a smart brush with the red skins, and drove 'em famous only three days before. We charged with a big shout into the hammocks—the swamp—and the Ingins gave us yell for yell, and shot for shot. They had a smart sight upon us for a good bit, while we were trying to get at 'em, and they popt us over, man after man, as they run from tree to tree, making every tree speak a bullet as soon as they could put the tongue behind it. Now, it happened that just when I and twenty others was wading through a good big bit of bog and water, with a pretty thick scrub in front, where the Ingins harbored, and jest when they were blazing away their hottest, who should we see, ahead of us all, but a man rather under the middle size—a white man—as ragged as a gypsy, without any hat, and with an old musket in his hand, pushing across, shouting his best, and full in the face of the fire of the red skins? Jest then, when we were all beginning to feel squeamish, he was going ahead, and whooping, without a bit of scare in him. Well, that encouraged us. We saw the Ingins aim at him, and I reckon his rags had the marks of more than a dozen bullets; but he didn't seem to mind 'em, and they sartainly never one of them troubled him. Away he went, shouting and shaking his musket, and away we went after him, and away the Indians went before us all. We drove 'em, and got the victory. We picked up some scalps, but nothing to speak of, and lost some good fellows. But I tell you that ragged volunteer went ahead of us all, and he was this same Jones Barry, about whom I've been telling you this long story. He had run all the way from Georgy into Florida after killing Hammond, without knowing much where he went. Never in his life had any man so bad a scare. He had run, as I may say, into the arms of the Ingins, without hearing their rifles; and I do believe, as I am a free white man,

that he scared them a great deal worse than our whole Tennessee regiment. For, look you, he was a man to scare people. He was, as I tell you, in rags from head to foot. He had been living among the briers, running into them almost at every sound. He had no covering for his head. His eyes were bloodshot; his face scratched over, and bleeding on all sides; and his hair had grown half white in twenty days. He looked for all the world like a madman. He was a madman; and, though he fought with us, and marched with us, and did everything pretty much as he saw us do, yet his senses, I'm mighty sure, were, all the time, more than a hundred miles away. Somehow, the poor fellow got in with me. We marched together and slept together. I reckon he saw that I was a good-natured chap, and so he tuk to me. I soon saw that he was miserable—that there was a scare that was gnawing in him all the time—and after awhile I found out that he was haunted constantly by the ghost of Randall Hammond. One night he ran out of the tent with a terrible fright. Another time, when standing with a sentry, he fired his piece and gave the alarm to the whole army. Then he'd fall upon his knees and beg for merey, and cover his eyes with his hands, as if to shut out some frightful thing he couldn't bear to look upon. Sometimes he'd run into the hammock at midnight, never fearing the Ingins, though we all thought it as much as one's life was worth to go near it. It was the dead he was afraid of all the time. Now, there was a sodger among the rig'lars to whom Jones Barry one night made confession and eased his heart of all its secrets. But it didn't ease him of his misery. The soldier came to me and told me all, and I ax'd Barry; but then he was shy, and swore that he never told the fellow any such thing. But it wasn't more than twenty-four hours after, when he come to me and said—

“‘I can't stand it much longer. I'm almost crazy now. Ran. Hammond comes to me every night. I'm his murderer, and he will have my blood. I must go

back to Georgy, and stand trial. I'll go and give myself up.'

" 'Well,' says I, 'my poor fellow, if you'll only wait till we're mustered out of sarvice, I'll go along with you. I'm sorry for you, and I don't think you're so much to blame. You've got a heart a little too tender; and as you killed your man in a fair fight, I don't see as how he should haunt you. He had as much chance at you, as you at him.' "

" 'Yes! but I thirsted for his blood, and he never did me any harm. He was a good man too! I must go back. I will deliver myself. I see him every night, covered with blood, and beckoning me, with his hands, to come. It's he leads me into the hammock, and there he leaves me. I must go back and give myself up to justice.' "

" 'Well, only wait till we're mustered out, and I'll go with you.' "

" He promised and did wait, and I kept my word. As soon as I got my discharge, I said to Barry, 'I'm ready.' We bought a pair of stout Seminole ponies, on a credit from our commissariat, and went off like gentlemen soldiers. I mustn't forget to tell you that he killed the mare that he made so much brag about, the 'Fair Geraldine,' in his run from Georgy, and tuk it on foot as soon as he got near the Ingin country. How he lived, God only knows, for I never saw a poor innocent eat so little. But I encouraged him, and made light of his mischief; and by little and little he began to improve. We got him some new clothes as soon as we struck the settlement; and, I think, when he got them on, his appetite came back a little to him. One night, the first night after we crossed the Georgy line, he ate a pretty good supper of bacon and eggs. I think 'twas all owing to his clothes. But that very night he gave me and the whole house a most outrageous scare. He broke out in his night-shirt, and dashed out of the room, and down the stairs into the hall, where he squatted

under the table. We slept in the same room, and as soon as I could slip on my breeches I made after him. He swore that the ghost of Hammond squatted down at the foot of the bed, and looked over into his face, though he tried to cover with the quilt. I told him 'twas the hot supper that gave him the nightmare, and I made him take a pretty deep swallow of apple-toddy, that the landlord made for us, after we routed him up with such a scrimmage. Well, so we went; now better, now worse; now calm, and now stormy, till we got pretty nigh his county, where all these things took place. Then his scare came back to him, then his heart failed him; and just when the ghost stopped troubling him, he began to be troubled by the fear of the laws. But I said to him—

“‘Be a man. You’ve come so far, see it out. Better be hung and have it over, than to be scared to death every night.’

“He groaned most bitterly, but he said, ‘You’re right! I can’t stand to suffer as I have suffered. I’m only twenty-six; and look, my head’s half white! I’m an old man in the feel as well as in the look. The ghost of Ran. Hammond has done me worse than my pistol ever did him. He’s given me a hell upon earth, so that I can’t believe there’s any half so bad for me hereafter. Go ahead!’

“And so we went forward. It was a most sweet and beautiful afternoon when we came into the very neighborhood of all these doings. We had passed several places that were famous in his recollection. There was Hillabee race-course, where they had the gander-pulling, and the circus, and soon we drew nigh to the great avenue leading to the ‘Lodge,’ where the young lady lived that had been the cause of all the mischief. But it wasn’t there that Barry wanted to go. The first place he wished to strike for was the farm of his friend Nettles, and we were only a half a mile from it, according to Barry’s calculations, when we came, by a sudden turn in the road, upon a buggy drawn by a splendid

horse, and carrying two people. One of them was a tall and noble-looking gentleman, and the other was a most beautiful lady, *perhaps* about the most beautiful I ever did see. They were coming right towards us at a smart trot, and, the moment Barry laid eyes fairly upon them, he turned pale as death, and dashed his horse into the bushes and off the road. I followed after him as soon as I could get a chance, but not till I had taken a good look at the strangers that seemed to frighten him so much. They rode by in a minute, and the gentleman gave me a civil bow as he passed. Then I pushed into the woods after Barry. I found him off his horse and hiding in the bushes, all over covered with a sweat, and trembling like a leaf in the wind.

“‘Why, what on airth,’ says I, ‘is the matter now? What *has* scared you so?’

“‘Didn’t you see him?’

“‘Who?’

“‘Hammond! ’Twas his ghost in the buggy!’

“‘And what has his ghost to do in a buggy, I wonder? and who ever saw the ghost of a buggy before?’ said I. ‘I don’t believe much in such a notion, and if that was Hammond’s ghost, I wonder what woman’s ghost it was sitting along-side of him. If woman ghosts are so pretty, I shouldn’t be much afraid of ’em myself.’

“‘Woman!’ said Barry, mightily bewildered. ‘Was there a woman with him?’

“‘Yes, as surely as there was a buggy and a man. Now look you, Barry; if that was Hammond in the buggy, he’s just as much alive as you and me. The chance is, after all, that you only wounded him, and you and your friend took a mortal scare too soon.’

“‘No! no!’ said he, very mournfully; ‘haven’t I seen him almost every night? hasn’t he followed me everywhere?—into the woods, into the swamps, into the hammock of the Ingins? and ain’t my head gray with his coming?’

“‘I don’t know,’ says I; ‘but if that was Hammond in the buggy, he’s no ghost; and it’s your conscience

that's been a troubling you. But let's push on, and see your friend Nettles; he ought to be able to tell us all about it.'

"And so, jest as I said, we pushed forward, and I reckon it all came out fast enough, as you shall see."

CHAPTER XXI.

SHOWING HOW HAMMOND'S GHOST WAS LAID, HOW BARRY WAS HUNG, AND HOW JUSTICE WAS DONE UPON OTHER OFFENDING PARTIES.

DISMISSING Tennessee for the present, we retrace our steps, and go back to the field of personal combat—that famous “Pistol Quarter,” which has witnessed so many fearful and violent transitions from time to eternity. We resume our narrative at the moment when Nettles sent poor Barry in terror off the field. Hardly had he disappeared when a wild shriek was heard from the adjoining thicket, and, before the parties on the ground could conjecture what was the matter, who should rush out amongst them but Geraldine Foster? Never were people so much confounded. Randall Hammond was lying on the grass just where he had fallen, his body partly raised, and resting on his elbow. She threw herself upon him with a cry which betrayed the wildest sense of personal suffering.

“I have slain him—I have slain him! Speak to me, Hammond; dear Hammond, speak to me. Say that you forgive me. Forgive the madness and the folly that have brought you to this. I loved you only; I shall always love you; but they told me you were proud and tyrannical, and they provoked my childish vanity until I maddened. Oh! Hammond, will you not forgive me? Will you not? will you not?”

She clung to him as she cried. Her arms were wound about him, and her face was buried in his bosom.

“Geraldine! Miss Foster!” said Hammond, trying to rise.

“Call me Geraldine; call me yours; forgive me, and

take me with you, Hammond! At this moment, I am yours only! I loved you only from the first!"

Nettles winked to the prostrate man, and made certain motions which, strictly construed, might be supposed to mean, "Take her at her word, marry her on the spot;" and the looks and signs of Henderson, now thoroughly cured of *his* passion, were equally significant to the same effect. But Hammond was superior to the temptation.

"Nay, Geraldine, you are deceived. I am in no danger; indeed, I am unhurt."

She started as if to rise, but he now restrained her, and, looking to his friends, motioned their departure.

"What does this mean?" she demanded.

"Hear me patiently, Geraldine, and let me plead in turn for your forgiveness. It means a foolish hoax, in which nobody ever dreamed that you would be a party. I am unwounded, and the object has been simply to scare the foolish person who, without provocation, has sought my life."

"Without provocation, Mr. Hammond? Do you forget the cruel insult you put upon me? Was it no provocation to shame a young maiden before all her friends and people? Oh, Hammond, how could you do me so—you, for whom I showed but too much preference from the beginning, in spite of all that my mother would say?"

"Will you suffer me to repent, Geraldine—to make amends?" And, by this time, the arm of the pleader was round about her waist, and his lips were pressed upon hers, and alone in that haunted wood, famous for its many murders, the two were betrothed with all the dearest promises of love. We need not follow the progress of the scene. Enough to say that the persons whom Barry and his friend from Tennessee encountered in the buggy, were Mr. and Mrs. Hammond. They had been fully three months married, and were living very comfortably together at the residence of Hammond's mother; while Mrs. Foster, vexed to the heart, was chewing the cud of disappointment at the "Lodge"

alone. All these facts were gathered from Tom Nettles, who very frankly declared his agency in the proceedings.

"I'm blowed," said the Tennessean, "if I was Barry, if I wouldn't have a real fight on the strength of it, and I'd make you my mark, my man."

But Barry himself shook his head.

"I've had enough of killing," said he.

"I can put you in the way of something better," said Nettles. "Polly Ewbanks is still alive, single, and fat as ever; Sukey Davy still keeps the bar at the old man's corner; and Mrs. Foster looks as well as I have ever seen her, and keeps a most excellent table. I'm willing to make amends, Jones, for what harm I've done you, by doing you finally 'for better or worse.' Now, if there's a man to manage either of these three pretty pieces of mortality, I'm that person. Shall it be 'back to back, Miss Polly—'?"

"Hush, you Satan!—"

"Or, 'Is it to your liking, sir?' "

"Devil!"

"Or, 'Is it more of the honey or more of the peach, dear Mr. Barry?'"

The Tennessean lingered a week among his new friends, and became so much enamored of Nettles that he asked him home with him. But the latter, born for the use of his neighbors, had a commission in hand for Barry that was somewhat urgently pressed. His hints had not been wholly thrown away, and Barry, among his latter-day reveries, was frequently and pleasurably entertained by the recollection of that cup of tea, and that bowl of toddy, by which the widow Foster had refreshed him in the little back room of her domicile. He remembered her round, well-proportioned figure, the sweet smile upon her face, the pleasant sparkle in her eye, and the grateful beverage in her hand; and he so earnestly pressed his ruminations and convictions on his friend Nettles, that the latter posted off one pleasant afternoon to the "Lodge," and did not return home

until the next day. He was, as usual, received in the kindest manner by the widow. He had always been solicitous of her favor, on the score of his just appreciation of her dinners and evening parties. If Nettles had a weakness at all, it lay in his passion for the creature comforts. He had always taken care to please her accordingly, and she was always glad to welcome him. He was a good companion, who picked up all the scandal going, and was ever ready for any mischief. We will suppose that, when the hour came for the evening meal, he found and enjoyed a delightful supper. The widow was unusually fresh and attractive. She had stolen off soon after his arrival, leaving him to adjust his six-feet upon the sofa, while she consulted her toilet. She returned just as he was emerging from his *siesta*, looking like Cleopatra, except that her dimensions were not so great, her skin so dark, nor her jewels quite so magnificent as those of that famous queen of Egypt.

"Really, Mrs. Foster, you grow younger and more fascinating every time I see you."

These gallant words accompanied a graceful taking and squeezing of the fair lady's hand. "There is one thing, however, which I think faulty about you."

"Faulty!" in consternation.

"Yes, faulty! and the fault is in your mind, your feelings, your thoughts, your sentiments."

"Indeed, Mr. Nettles!" bewildered.

"Yes, madam! it consists in your contentment; in that cold disdain of humanity; in that scornful indifference to my sex, which makes you willing to sacrifice this youth, this bloom, this beauty—nay, you know I never flatter!—I say, to sacrifice all these possessions in seclusion, without sharing them with that most precious of all heavenly gifts, a husband."

"Really, Mr. Nettles, you have a most elevated opinion of the value and usefulness of your sex."

"Not more than the really wise of your sex have been always pleased to entertain. You remember it was the

foolish virgins that were unprepared at the coming of the bridegroom."

"Yes, sir! but even were I to allow that, there is still another difficulty. The bridegroom does not happen so frequently in a widow's chances that she can change her solitary condition when she pleases; and, unless there is a prospect of his coming, what's the policy of her admitting that she finds her solitude unpleasant?"

"Mrs. Foster, many a man would woo if the lady would only coo; but men, you are aware, are naturally modest."

"Oh, Mr. Nettles!"

"They are, madam! they are! It is the woman always that is the tempter, and naturally enough. If we put a very high estimate on her value, we are apt to feel that we fall below it, and we approach her rather with a sense of her superior merits and position than of our passion, though it may burn us up all the while. Now, a case happens at this moment to my knowledge, and I must say that you are interested in it."

"Me, sir!"

"Yes, Mrs. Foster, you! I know a gentleman who feels for you a most profound passion, but who dares not—"

"Nay, Mr. Nettles! what have you ever seen about me that should repel or discourage any gentleman?" and the lady smoothed down the folds of her dress, and, smiling sweetly, inclined somewhat to the speaker.

"The beautiful crocodile!" thought Nettles to himself; "she evidently suspects me of being this bashful gentleman. What a harpy!"

But, though thus thinking, he never suffered his eyes to breathe any but an expression of tender interest and regard. Still, fearing that she might assume too much, as Nettles never deceived himself in the opinion that he was a very personable man and likely to prove quite too attractive for most women, he hurried forward to a full revelation of his object, and of the person in whose behalf he came. He had his own way of doing this.

"Mrs. Foster," said he, gravely, "you have certainly shown yourself to be the most remarkable of women. I have seen you for six months working busily to procure for another the devotion which was all the while overflowing for yourself."

"Really, Mr. Nettles, you speak parables. What are you driving at?"

"Let me explain. You will do me the justice to admit that if anybody knows the people of this county, man, woman, hoyden and hobby-de-hoy, it is myself."

"Granted, sir!"

"Some of these have been accustomed to consult me in the most important matters. Among these persons is my friend Jones Barry. You partially took him out of my hands, but you played your hands badly. You perversely tried to persuade him that he was desperately in love with Miss Geraldine—"

"Don't speak of that young lady in my hearing, I beg you, Mr. Nettles!"

"Pardon me, but I can't help it; it's necessary to what I've got to say. But I'll not dwell upon it. Well, as I tell you, at the very time that you were doing your best against nature and yourself, to force this belief into his heart, the poor fellow was devotedly attached to another."

"Indeed! You surprise me, sir."

"Such was your powerful influence over him, that you could persuade him to anything; and, yielding to your seeming wishes and opinions, he professed attachment to your step-daughter, while his heart was all the time ready to burst with a passion for yourself."

"For me, sir? Jones Barry fond of me?"

"To devotion—to distraction; and how you could be so blind as not to have seen it, passes my imagination. How often has he consulted with me on this very subject! How often have I told him, 'Come out like a man, and tell her what you feel!' His only answer was: 'No! She doesn't think of me. It's evident she thinks only of the marriage of Geraldine. She will never

marry again. Her heart's in the grave with Foster! Then he would weep, and say: 'I must marry Geraldine, if it's only to be near to her!'

"Poor Jones! and how he concealed it!"

"Concealed it? No, madam, it was only from *your* eyes that he concealed it. It wasn't his art in hiding; it was your blindness in not seeing. Why, the night of the *fête*, he said to me that, when you fed him with tea from the cup, while he sat in a chair in your little back-room, he thought he should overflow with delight, and the next day, when you mixed him some peach toddy, he said, 'coming from your hands, it was the most delicious dram that ever his lips had tasted.' "

"Dear Jones, and he felt all this?"

"All this, and was silent!"

"And I was doing my best to force him upon one who didn't care a straw for him."

"Suicidally, as I called it; for, as I said to him, you are evidently made for each other."

"You said *that*, Mr. Nettles? Ah! you're a sharp-sighted person."

"Says I, 'Barry! Foster is young and lovable. She's scarcely older than her step-daughter. She's unselfish. She sees that you are the man to make Geraldine happy, because she feels that you would make herself so; and she ought not to be permitted to sacrifice herself. Go to her, tell her the truth, lay your whole heart open to her, and my life on it, she will then discover what, perhaps, she does not yet see, that you have taken a deeper hold on her own heart than she has any idea. At her, like a man; and, if she be the tender-hearted woman that I think her, she will not reject you.' "

The widow sighed deeply. "But he did not follow your counsel?"

"He did not believe me. His fears blinded him. He worshipped you too devotedly. Had he felt a weaker passion, he would have been more bold. But his heart failed him, and he would have suffered himself to be

shot; nay, don't I know that he went out fully expecting to be killed by Hammond's bullet, even hoping it, that he might no longer be kept in such miserable anxiety?"

"Poor, poor fellow!"

"And now, that he knows my object in coming here, he is on thorns of misery. His horse is already saddled. He has raised all the ready money he can, and, the moment he gets my report, if it's unfavorable, he'll set off to join his fat friend in Tennessee. He will sell out, and leave Georgia forever. He even talks of joining the regular army, hoping to be killed in the first engagement."

"But he must never do it."

"It will depend on you. He is at my house waiting. I have agreed that, if I am successful, I am to wave a white handkerchief, and if not, a red one, just as I get in the avenue. His mind's in a most awful state, and it's for you, my dear Mrs. Foster, to determine his fate."

"Oh! Mr. Nettles, you see too deeply into the hearts of us poor women to doubt what must be my answer. Poor, dear Barry, I always was fond of him. But I never thought he had any feeling for me, and so I tried only to get for him that disobedient girl."

"What blindness! And so?"

"Oh! you do with me what you please, Mr. Nettles. It's a wonder you never married yourself. You're single only because you never wished to be otherwise."

"Ah! you flatter me, Foster! But I must resign my hopes and wishes to others. I live for my friends only. But, in giving them up, I have my consolation; and when carrying off the heart of a lady to another, I am privileged, as a matter of course, to take her kisses for myself."

The widow did not struggle seriously against the spoliation which followed this pretty speech.

"Barry will be the happiest man alive."

"But have you a white handkerchief with you? I

see that you use a red one," demanded the provident widow.

"Indeed I have not!" said Nettles, feeling in his pockets, and looking disquieted.

"Take mine, dear Mr. Nettles. Poor Barry, he must not be suffered to throw himself away!"

How Nettles chuckled as he left the "Lodge!" In less than a month, the widow became Mrs. Barry. We have no reason to suppose that her husband repented the proceeding, and we know that Nettles did not. He usually took his Sunday dinner at the "Lodge," and was master of ceremonies on all occasions. He himself never married. Why should he, when he could so easily persuade his friends to do so? Miles Henderson, in the course of the year, was caught by Henrietta Bailey, one of the girls of whom Mrs. Hammond thought so much; and he lived sufficiently happy with her to feel no repinings at the sweet and singular affection which existed between Hammond and his wife. He, it is true, remained the master, but she exercised, though she did not assert, all the authority of the mistress. There has been no duel at "Pistol Quarter" since the famous affair that terminated the tragic part of our comedy.

THE END.

C. K.

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